



Program Statement

OPI: HSD
NUMBER: 1601.04
DATE: 9/11/2002
SUBJECT: Workers' Compensation
Program

1. **PURPOSE AND SCOPE.** To establish procedures for the Bureau's Workers' Compensation Program to ensure compliance by all employees with the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) (20 CFR Part 10). Additionally:

- To provide a safe and healthful working environment for employees in an effort to keep job-related injuries and occupational exposures to an absolute minimum.
- To provide temporary alternative duty (TAD) assignments to Bureau employees who have incurred job related injuries or illnesses which temporarily prevents them from performing their assigned duties.

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) provides compensation benefits to United States civilian employees for disability due to personal injury or disease sustained while in the performance of official duty. It also provides for the payment of benefits to dependents if a work-related injury or disease causes an employee's death. As provided for by federal regulations and statutes, injured/ill workers will be assisted in returning to work consistent with their medical condition.

The Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Worker's Compensation Programs (OWCP) administers the FECA. OWCP has established district offices to review all medical and factual information presented on behalf of an injured worker for adjudicating the claim.

A list and description of the forms relating to the Workers' Compensation Program may be found in 20 CFR part 10.7.

2. **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES.** The expected results of this program are:

- a. Claims will be filed promptly, fully investigated, and

b. The length of employee absence from the job because of worker's compensation claims will be reduced by providing TAD assignments to return injured/ill employees to duty in a manner consistent with their prescribed medical condition/limitations.

a. **Directive Rescinded**

b. Directives Referenced

20 CFR Part 10

e. 20 CFR Part 10 - Claims for Compensation Under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, As Amended, Subpart A-F.

5. **SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES.** When an employee reports a work-related injury or illness to his or her supervisor, the supervisor is to:

- Ensure the employee is provided the opportunity to receive medical attention (if necessary) immediately and notify the Safety Department promptly.
- Provide required forms and ensure completion of forms as soon as possible to ensure proper filing in accordance with DOL regulations. Assist employees to complete the forms and explain that a temporary alternative duty (TAD) assignment may be made available.
- Advise the employee of his or her responsibility to submit medical evidence of disability as soon as possible to expedite the claim. Under no circumstances will this be provided later than 10 calendar days after filing the claim for COP.
- Assist in the investigation of reported job-related injuries and diseases.
- Ensure that the required forms for lost time or medical expenses related to injuries are completed and forwarded to the Safety Department.
- Meet with the Workers' Compensation Committee (see Section 10 of this Program Statement) to discuss the case, including the possibility of a TAD assignment.

If an assignment is approved, work with the Human Resource Manager to complete the TAD letter.

Present the TAD letter to employee. If the employee objects to the TAD assignment, the supervisor and Human Resource Manager will meet with the employee to discuss the employee's objections.

- Notify the Associate Warden and Safety Manager of the employee's concerns regarding the proposed TAD assignment.
- Although Form CA-17 is usually adequate, the employer may contact the employee at reasonable intervals to request periodic medical reports addressing his or her ability to return to work.
- Advise relevant staff who have a need to know of the employee's status.

6. **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES.** When a Bureau employee is injured at work or experiences an occupational exposure due to work-related reasons, he or she needs to:

- Report any work-related injury or occupational exposure to immediate supervisor without delay.
- Receive the appropriate workers' compensation forms from his or her supervisor or the Safety Department.
- Complete the appropriate forms and turn them in to his or her immediate supervisor as soon as possible but not later than 30 days from the date of injury/illness. At this time, the immediate supervisor will explain that a TAD assignment may be made available.
- Obtain the Employee Injury Report form (BP-S758.016) and request that the physician complete and fax it to the Safety Manager as soon as possible.
- Telephone his or her supervisor as soon as possible after being seen by his or her physician to inform the supervisor of his or her:
 - P medical diagnosis,
 - P prognosis, and
 - P projected treatment.
- Submit medical evidence of disability within 10 working days or risk termination of Continuation of Pay (COP).
- Keep his or her supervisor informed of medical status including submitting medical updates as required or deemed necessary.
- Notify the supervisor when the TAD assignment is no longer necessary (or when medically cleared to return to duty if no TAD assignment) and provide written release from physician.

a. **TAD Assignment.** If the employee is recommended for a TAD assignment, he or she will receive verbal notification immediately followed by a letter within two (2) business days of the verbal offer, for each TAD assignment, signed by the supervisor explaining the assignment. The employer must send a complete copy of any job offer to OWCP when it is sent to the employee.

If the employee does not agree to the TAD assignment, the employee must meet with his or her supervisor to discuss any concerns and provide these objections to the supervisor in writing.

It should be noted that OWCP monitors employees on light or limited duty.

b. **Appeals.** If, after review by the Workers' Compensation Committee, the Warden decides to place the employee on the TAD assignment in spite of his or her objections, the employee may appeal this action using the appropriate grievance procedure.

7. **HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES.** Human Resource Management staff are the subject matter experts for issues related to pay and benefits therefore, they review requests for salary information on injured staff and provide such information to Safety Department staff as necessary to process a claim.

HRM staff must:

- Provide advice to the employee and management about the relationship between OWCP benefits and disability retirement.
- If TAD assignment is approved, work with the supervisor to complete the TAD letter for the Warden's signature. The letter will notify the employee of the dates that TAD will be made available, the shift, and the job duties including:

- P a description of the duties of the position,
- P the physical requirements of those duties, and
- P the date by which the employee is either to return to work or notify the HRM of his or her decision to accept or refuse the job offer.

A copy of any job offer made to bargaining unit staff will be sent to the Safety Manager for his or her records and to the Union president or designee.

- If the employee refuses the TAD assignment, the Human Resource Manager is to:
 - P review the employee's written objections,
 - P discuss the objection with Workers' Compensation Committee members,

- P prepare a final decision letter for the Warden's signature, and
 - P review the attending physician's written limitations and restrictions.
 - Provide technical assistance to management with reassignment or removal actions based on the employee's inability to perform the duties of his or her position (including notification of employee restoration to duty rights following full or partial recovery). If a reassignment is effected for a member of the bargaining unit, training will be provided if needed, for the employee in accordance with Article 21 of the Master Agreement.
 - Ensure that personnel actions are processed (after notification by the Safety Department of the employee's placement in compensation status) including:
 - P documentation of non-pay status,
 - P pay actions,
 - P restorations to duty,
 - P transfers of health and life insurance benefits to OWCP, and
 - P retirement for employees going on compensation.
 - Advise and assist employees of the effect of being in a non-pay status including the impact on:
 - P health/life insurance,
 - P Thrift Savings Plan accounts/contributions,
 - P within-grade increases,
 - P leave,
 - P retirement, and
 - P buying back annual or sick leave used in lieu of compensation.
 - Advise and assist management to notify employees about required medical examinations in connection with job-related injuries/diseases.
8. **SAFETY DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES** are to:
- Serve as the OWCP focal point for management and the injured/ill employee.
 - In accordance with 20 CFR 10.300, provide a completed (agency portion) CA-16 form to authorize medical treatment if necessary, and provide the forms and assist with forms completion.

- After review, forward OWCP forms in a timely manner for processing, ensuring that appropriate medical documentation is attached if required.
- Develop and maintain an Employee Injury File.
- Review case, and schedule the case to be evaluated by the Workers' Compensation Committee.
- Maintain contact with the employee and assist both the employee and management as necessary, take minutes of Committee meetings, and distribute the minutes to concerned institution personnel and the Worker's Compensation Program Coordinator, Central Office (via BOPNet GroupWise or fax).
- Investigate reported job-related injuries and diseases to determine the cause of accidents and illnesses, and take appropriate action to eliminate these causes when possible.

9. **HEALTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES** are to:

- Provide medical expertise in evaluating TAD offers for injured workers.
- When necessary, contact injured/ill worker's physician to confirm and/or define:
 - P medical limitations, as they relate to employment within the Bureau of Prisons,
 - P diagnosis, or
 - P prognosis.

10. **WORKER'S COMPENSATION COMMITTEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES.** Each institution must establish a Worker's Compensation Committee to include, but not be limited to:

- An Associate Warden
- Safety staff
- Human Resource Management staff
- Health Services staff
- Claimant's supervisor (to be present only during discussion of their subordinate's case)
- Union (for discussion of bargaining unit employee - as defined in the Master Agreement- cases only)
- Designated Representative (for discussion of the specific case only).

All Committee members must maintain confidentiality regarding case discussions.

With regard to the claimant's medical information: the committee is only authorized access to information needed to discuss the injured employee's specific limitation and restrictions as set forth by the attending physician's and the relationship to the alternative position(s), unless such access by the Committee to information is permissible under the routine use of OWCP case file information under DOL regulations.

a. **Meetings.** The Committee is to meet:

- on an as-needed basis to discuss short-term cases (COP cases which are likely to exceed the first 45 days after the injury and become compensation cases);
- at least annually to review long-term worker's compensation cases (more than one year on compensation rolls); and
- as called by the Safety Manager to discuss TAD assignments.

The Committee will also evaluate the local program and make recommendations to address staff safety concerns. At institutions where there are no long term cases, it is not necessary to have an annual meeting.

b. **Case Responsibilities.** The Committee will:

- Review and assess the claimant's current and projected medical status. All possibilities for facilitating a return to work must be explored.
- Provide a memorandum to the Warden recommending a TAD assignment, including a brief description of duties of the TAD assignment and a projected work schedule.
- If an employee disagrees with a proposed TAD assignment, the Committee will:
 - P contact the treating physician in writing,
 - P review information supplied by the employee, and
 - P make a recommendation to the Warden on the appropriateness of the TAD assignment.
- When it is apparent from medical diagnosis or prognosis that an employee will not be able to perform the duties of his or her permanent position for more than one year, a decision should be made during the meeting to contact OWCP for possible:

- P vocational rehabilitation,
- P retraining,
- P nurse intervention, and/or
- P assignment to other positions.

11. **CLAIMS PROCESSING PROCEDURES.** An outline of claims processing procedures are provided below. Detailed information is available on each applicable form.

- The employee will report any work related injury to his or her immediate supervisor without delay.
- The supervisor will ensure that the Safety Department is notified of the on the job injury or work-related illness.
- The employee, or his or her designee, will obtain the required forms to document the injury/disease from the Safety Department.
- The supervisor and the Safety Department will assist the employee in completing the forms, if necessary.
- The forms will be provided to the employee's supervisor for completion. He or she then forwards the completed forms to the Safety Department.
- The Safety Department will review the forms; obtain salary information from the Human Resource Management Department, if necessary; and process the forms appropriately (i.e., file or forward to OWCP).

12. **TEMPORARY WORK ASSIGNMENTS.** Examples of TAD assignments may include assignment to a position that does not require interaction with inmates or can include partial (less than eight hour) workdays, as the needs of the injured/ill employee and the institution indicate. During the time the employee is on TAD, ample time will be provided for medical and physical therapy appointments.

TAD is meant to provide a temporary, not permanent, arrangement for an employee to continue working while recovering from an injury/illness. If an injured/ill employee's medical condition has not resolved itself within the six month time frame of TAD, the Worker's Compensation Coordinator, Health Services Division, Central Office, should be contacted so appropriate notification to OWCP can be made.

The security of the institution and the safety of staff and inmates therein remains of primary importance. Because of these factors, there is no guarantee that any staff member will be considered for or receive a TAD assignment.

13. **INSTITUTION RESPONSIBILITY.** The institution is responsible for identifying and developing temporary alternative duty assignments. To reduce disruption to the institution and to facilitate the worker's recovery, injured/ill workers will be placed, when possible, within the department where their original job assigned is located.

Identified TAD assignments will be submitted to the Regional Safety Administrator for discussion and review prior to program implementation.

14. **EXCLUSIVITY OF REMEDY.** Pursuant to Federal statute, benefits provided under the FECA constitute the sole remedy against the United States for work-related injury or death. The Federal Employees' Compensation Act holds that a Federal employee or surviving dependent is not entitled to sue the U.S. Government or recover damages for such injury or death under any other statute.

15. **PENALTIES.** The regulations at 20 CFR 10.23 state that any person who knowingly makes, or knowingly certifies, any false statement, misrepresentation, concealment of fact, or any other act of fraud with respect to a claim under the FECA or who knowingly accepts compensation to which that person is not entitled, is subject to criminal prosecution and may, under appropriate provisions of 18 U.S.C., be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than five years, or both.

Any person who knowingly makes or certifies any false statement, misrepresentation, concealment of fact, or any other act of fraud, or impedes a claim under FECA is subject to criminal and/or civil penalties as referenced under 20 CFR Section 10.16.

- Any person who, with respect to a claim under the FECA, enters into any agreement, combination, or conspiracy to defraud the United States by obtaining or aiding to obtain the payment or allowance of any false, fictitious or fraudulent claim is subject to criminal prosecution and may, under appropriate provisions of 18 U.S.C., be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than ten years, or both.

- Any person charged with the responsibility of making reports in connection with an injury who willfully fails, neglects, or refuses to do so; induces, compels, or directs an injured employee to forego filing a claim; or willfully retains any notice, report, or paper required in connection with an injury, is subject to a fine of \$500 or imprisonment for not more than one year, or both.

16. **RECORDS.** Individual case files are protected under the Privacy Act, and only the employee, his or her representative (if any), and relevant Bureau staff may have routine access to the file.

Any of these parties may inspect the DOL file at the appropriate DOL district office by appointment.

/s/

Kathleen Hawk Sawyer
Director

SAMPLE ALTERNATIVE DUTY PROPOSAL LETTER

Joe Smith, Correctional Officer
Federal Correctional Institution
Laughlin, California 93433

Dear Mr. Smith:

This letter confirms our conversation of February 1, 2000 in which you were offered a temporary alternative duty assignment. The duties of which conform to the physical limitations established by your physician for your on-the-job injury of January 5, 2000.

The following describes the duties and physical/environmental requirements of this position. *(The following is an example of the functional requirements that must be included in narrative format and must comply with the individual's physical limitation.)* While sitting in a chair, you input data into a remote computer terminal. The terminal is at eye level when the operator is in a sitting position, and no reaching or working above shoulder level is required. You may occasionally be required to move and carry computer listings short distances. The weight of the listings does not exceed 10 pounds. You may be required to walk short distances on an intermittent basis, not to exceed a total of 1 hour per day. No stair climbing is involved. You will be working indoors and will not be exposed to cold or dampness. You will be allowed to sit or stand at your convenience, for comfort, and you will be permitted to take frequent walks. *(Include the dates of assignment, duty hours, and location.)* A copy of the official position description is attached.

If you decline this position, and OWCP determines that this is a job that you can perform, your benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act may be terminated (except for medical benefits). Your decision to accept or decline this offer should be made in writing. The enclosed Acceptance/Declination Statement is provided for this purpose. Failure to notify this office of your decision will constitute a rejection of a valid offer and may serve as a legal basis for OWCP to terminate benefits.

If you have any questions, please contact your immediate supervisor.

Sincerely,

Enclosures

CC: Safety Office
OWCP Claims Examiner

SAMPLE

ACCEPTANCE/DECLINATION STATEMENT

I voluntarily accept the temporary position of (Job
title/Grade/Step). I am aware that no reduction in pay will
result from this assignment.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

I decline this offer of the temporary position of (Job
Title/Grade/Step). I fully understand the consequences that if I
decline the assignment and OWCP determines that this is a job I
can perform, that my compensation benefits may be terminated
(except for medical benefits) under Section 8106 (c) of 5 United
States Code.

Give reason for declination:

Printed Name

Signature

Date

[Code of Federal Regulations]
[Title 20, Volume 1]
[Revised as of April 1, 2001]
From the U.S. Government Printing Office via GPO Access
[CITE: 20CFR10]
[Page 11-18]

TITLE 20--EMPLOYEES' BENEFITS

CHAPTER I--OFFICE OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION PROGRAMS, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

PART 10--CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION UNDER THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT, AS AMENDED--Table of Contents

Subpart A--General Provisions

Introduction

Sec. 10.0 What are the provisions of the FECA, in general?

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) as amended (5 U.S.C. 8101 et seq.) provides for the payment of workers' compensation benefits to civilian officers and employees of all branches of the Government of the United States. The regulations in this part describe the rules for filing, processing, and paying claims for benefits under the FECA. Proceedings under the FECA are non-adversarial in nature.

(a) The FECA has been amended and extended a number of times to provide workers' compensation benefits to volunteers in the Civil Air Patrol (5 U.S.C. 8141), members of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (5 U.S.C. 8140), Peace Corps Volunteers (5 U.S.C. 8142), Job Corps enrollees and Volunteers in Service to America (5 U.S.C. 8143), members of the National Teachers Corps (5 U.S.C. 8143a), certain student employees (5 U.S.C. 5351 and 8144), certain law enforcement officers not employed by the United States (5 U.S.C. 8191-8193), and various other classes of persons who provide or have provided services to the Government of the United States.

(b) The FECA provides for payment of several types of benefits, including compensation for wage loss, schedule awards, medical and related benefits, and vocational rehabilitation services for conditions resulting from injuries sustained in performance of duty while in service to the United States.

(c) The FECA also provides for payment of monetary compensation to specified survivors of an employee whose death resulted from a work-related injury and for payment of certain burial expenses subject to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 8134.

(d) All types of benefits and conditions of eligibility listed in this section are subject to the provisions of the FECA and of this part. This section shall not be construed to modify or enlarge upon the provisions of the FECA.

Sec. 10.1 What rules govern the administration of the FECA and this chapter?

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. 8145 and Secretary's Order 5-96, the responsibility for administering the FECA, except for 5 U.S.C. 8149 as it pertains to the Employees' Compensation Appeals Board, has been delegated to the Assistant Secretary for Employment Standards. The Assistant Secretary, in turn, has delegated the authority and

responsibility for administering the FECA to the Director of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). Except as otherwise provided by law, the Director, OWCP and his or her designees have the exclusive authority to administer, interpret and enforce the provisions of the Act.

Sec. 10.2 What do these regulations contain?

This part 10 sets forth the regulations governing administration of all claims filed under the FECA, except to the extent specified in certain particular provisions. Its provisions are intended to assist persons seeking compensation benefits under the FECA, as well as personnel in the various Federal agencies and the Department of Labor who process claims filed under the FECA or who perform administrative functions with respect to the FECA. This part 10 applies to part 25 of this chapter except as modified by part 25. The various subparts of this part contain the following:

(a) Subpart A: The general statutory and administrative framework for processing claims under the FECA. It contains a statement of purpose and scope, together with definitions of terms, descriptions of basic forms, information about the disclosure of OWCP records, and a description of rights and penalties under the FECA, including convictions for fraud.

(b) Subpart B: The rules for filing notices of injury and claims for benefits under the FECA. It also addresses evidence and burden of proof, as well as the process of making decisions concerning eligibility for benefits.

(c) Subpart C: The rules governing claims for and payment of continuation of pay.

(d) Subpart D: The rules governing emergency and routine medical care, second opinion and referee medical examinations directed by OWCP, and medical reports and records in general. It also addresses the kinds of treatment which may be authorized and how medical bills are paid.

(e) Subpart E: The rules relating to the payment of monetary compensation benefits for disability, impairment and death. It includes the provisions for identifying and processing overpayments of compensation.

(f) Subpart F: The rules governing the payment of continuing compensation benefits. It includes provisions concerning the employee's and the employer's responsibilities in returning the employee to work. It also contains provisions governing reports of earnings and dependents, recurrences, and reduction and termination of compensation benefits.

(g) Subpart G: The rules governing the appeals of decisions under the FECA. It includes provisions relating to hearings, reconsiderations, and appeals before the Employees' Compensation Appeals Board.

(h) Subpart H: The rules concerning legal representation and for adjustment and recovery from a third party. It also contains provisions relevant to three groups of employees whose status requires special application of the provisions of the FECA: Federal grand and petit jurors, Peace Corps volunteers, and non-Federal law enforcement officers.

(i) Subpart I: Information for medical providers. It includes rules for medical reports, medical bills, and the OWCP medical fee schedule, as well as the provisions for exclusion of medical providers.

Sec. 10.3 Have the collection of information requirements of this part been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)?

The collection of information requirements in this part have been approved by OMB and assigned OMB control numbers 1215-0055, 1215-0067, 1215-0078, 1215-0103, 1215-0105, 1215-0115, 1215-0116, 1215-0144, 1215-0151, 1215-0154, 1215-0155, 1215-0161, 1215-0167, 1215-0176, 1215-0178, 1215-0182, 1215-0193 and 1215-0194.

Definitions and Forms

Sec. 10.5 What definitions apply to these regulations?

Certain words and phrases found in this part are defined in this section or in the FECA. Some other words and phrases that are used only in limited situations are defined in the later subparts of these regulations.

(a) Benefits or Compensation means the money OWCP pays to or on behalf of a beneficiary from the Employees' Compensation Fund for lost wages, a loss of wage-earning capacity or a permanent physical impairment, as well as the money paid to beneficiaries for an employee's death. These two terms also include any other amounts paid out of the Employees' Compensation Fund for such things as medical treatment, medical examinations conducted at the request of OWCP as part of the claims adjudication process, vocational rehabilitation services, services of an attendant and funeral expenses, but does not include continuation of pay.

(b) Beneficiary means an individual who is entitled to a benefit under the FECA and this part.

(c) Claim means a written assertion of an individual's entitlement to benefits under the FECA, submitted in a manner authorized by this part.

(d) Claimant means an individual whose claim has been filed.

(e) Director means the Director of OWCP or a person designated to carry out his or her functions.

(f) Disability means the incapacity, because of an employment injury, to earn the wages the employee was receiving at the time of injury. It may be partial or total.

(g) Earnings from employment or self-employment means:

(1) Gross earnings or wages before any deductions and includes the value of subsistence, quarters, reimbursed expenses and any other goods or services received in kind as remuneration; or

(2) A reasonable estimate of the cost to have someone else perform the duties of an individual who accepts no remuneration. Neither lack of profits, nor the characterization of the duties as a hobby, removes an unremunerated individual's responsibility to report the estimated cost to have someone else perform his or her duties.

(h) Employee means, but is not limited to, an individual who fits within one of the following listed groups:

(1) A civil officer or employee in any branch of the Government of the United States, including an officer or employee of an instrumentality wholly owned by the United States;

(2) An individual rendering personal service to the United States similar to the service of a civil officer or employee of the United States, without pay or for nominal pay, when a statute authorizes the acceptance or use of the service, or authorizes payment of travel or other expenses of the individual;

(3) An individual, other than an independent contractor or an individual employed by an independent contractor, employed on the Menominee Indian Reservation in Wisconsin in operations conducted under a statute relating to tribal timber and logging operations on that

reservation;

(4) An individual appointed to a position on the office staff of a former President; or

(5) An individual selected and serving as a Federal petit or grand juror.

(i) Employer or Agency means any civil agency or instrumentality of the United States Government, or any other organization, group or institution employing an individual defined as an ``employee'' by this section. These terms also refer to officers and employees of an employer having responsibility for the supervision, direction or control of employees of that employer as an ``immediate superior,'' and to other employees designated by the employer to carry out the functions vested in the employer under the FECA and this part, including officers or employees delegated responsibility by an employer for authorizing medical treatment for injured employees.

(j) Entitlement means entitlement to benefits as determined by OWCP under the FECA and the procedures described in this part.

(k) FECA means the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, as amended.

(l) Hospital services means services and supplies provided by hospitals within the scope of their practice as defined by State law.

(m) Impairment means any anatomic or functional abnormality or loss. A permanent impairment is any such abnormality or loss after maximum medical improvement has been achieved.

(n) Knowingly means with knowledge, consciously, willfully or intentionally.

(o) Medical services means services and supplies provided by or under the supervision of a physician. Reimbursable chiropractic services are limited to physical examinations (and related laboratory tests), x-rays performed to diagnose a subluxation of the spine and treatment consisting of manual manipulation of the spine to correct a subluxation.

(p) Medical support services means services, drugs, supplies and appliances provided by a person other than a physician or hospital.

(q) Occupational disease or Illness means a condition produced by the work environment over a period longer than a single workday or shift.

(r) OWCP means the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs.

(s) Pay rate for compensation purposes means the employee's pay, as determined under 5 U.S.C. 8114, at the time of injury, the time disability begins or the time compensable disability recurs if the recurrence begins more than six months after the injured employee resumes regular full-time employment with the United States, whichever is greater, except as otherwise determined under 5 U.S.C. 8113 with respect to any period.

(t) Physician means an individual defined as such in 5 U.S.C. 8101(2), except during the period for which his or her license to practice medicine has been suspended or revoked by a State licensing or regulatory authority.

(u) Qualified hospital means any hospital licensed as such under State law which has not been excluded under the provisions of subpart I of this part. Except as otherwise provided by regulation, a qualified hospital shall be deemed to be designated or approved by OWCP.

(v) Qualified physician means any physician who has not been excluded under the provisions of subpart I of this part. Except as otherwise provided by regulation, a qualified physician shall be deemed to be designated or approved by OWCP.

(w) Qualified provider of medical support services or supplies means any person, other than a physician or a hospital, who provides services, drugs, supplies and appliances for which OWCP makes payment, who possesses any applicable licenses required under State law, and who has

not been excluded under the provisions of subpart I of this part.

(x) Recurrence of disability means an inability to work after an employee has returned to work, caused by a spontaneous change in a medical condition which had resulted from a previous injury or illness without an intervening injury or new exposure to the work environment that caused the illness. This term also means an inability to work that takes place when a light-duty assignment made specifically to accommodate an employee's physical limitations due to his or her work-related injury or illness is withdrawn (except when such withdrawal occurs for reasons of misconduct, non-performance of job duties or a reduction-in-force), or when the physical requirements of such an assignment are altered so that they exceed his or her established physical limitations.

(y) Recurrence of medical condition means a documented need for further medical treatment after release from treatment for the accepted condition or injury when there is no accompanying work stoppage. Continuous treatment for the original condition or injury is not considered a ``need for further medical treatment after release from treatment,'' nor is an examination without treatment.

(z) Representative means an individual properly authorized by a claimant in writing to act for the claimant in connection with a claim or proceeding under the FECA or this part.

(aa) Student means an individual defined at 5 U.S.C. 8101(17). Two terms used in that particular definition are further defined as follows:

(1) Additional type of educational or training institution means a technical, trade, vocational, business or professional school accredited or licensed by the United States Government or a State Government or any political subdivision thereof providing courses of not less than three months duration, that prepares the individual for a livelihood in a trade, industry, vocation or profession.

(2) Year beyond the high school level means:

(i) The 12-month period beginning the month after the individual graduates from high school, provided he or she had indicated an intention to continue schooling within four months of high school graduation, and each successive 12-month period in which there is school attendance or the payment of compensation based on such attendance; or

(ii) If the individual has indicated that he or she will not continue schooling within four months of high school graduation, the 12-month period beginning with the month that the individual enters school to continue his or her education, and each successive 12-month period in which there is school attendance or the payment of compensation based on such attendance.

(bb) Subluxation means an incomplete dislocation, off-centering, misalignment, fixation or abnormal spacing of the vertebrae which must be demonstrable on any x-ray film to an individual trained in the reading of x-rays.

(cc) Surviving spouse means the husband or wife living with or dependent for support upon a deceased employee at the time of his or her death, or living apart for reasonable cause or because of the deceased employee's desertion.

(dd) Temporary aggravation of a pre-existing condition means that factors of employment have directly caused that condition to be more severe for a limited period of time and have left no greater impairment than existed prior to the employment injury.

(ee) Traumatic injury means a condition of the body caused by a specific event or incident, or series of events or incidents, within a single workday or shift. Such condition must be caused by external force, including stress or strain, which is identifiable as to time and place of occurrence and member or function of the body affected.

Sec. 10.6 What special statutory definitions apply to dependents and survivors?

(a) 5 U.S.C. 8133 provides that certain benefits are payable to certain enumerated survivors of employees who have died from an injury sustained in the performance of duty.

(b) 5 U.S.C. 8148 also provides that certain other benefits may be payable to certain family members of employees who have been incarcerated due to a felony conviction.

(c) 5 U.S.C. 8110(b) further provides that any employee who is found to be eligible for a basic benefit shall be entitled to have such basic benefit augmented at a specified rate for certain persons who live in the beneficiary's household or who are dependent upon the beneficiary for support.

(d) 5 U.S.C. 8101, 8110, 8133 and 8148, which define the nature of such survivorship or dependency necessary to qualify a beneficiary for a survivor's benefit or an augmented benefit, apply to the provisions of this part.

Sec. 10.7 What forms are needed to process claims under the FECA?

(a) Notice of injury, claims and certain specified reports shall be made on forms prescribed by OWCP. Employers shall not modify these forms or use substitute forms. Employers are expected to maintain an adequate supply of the basic forms needed for the proper recording and reporting of injuries.

Form No.	Title
(1) CA-1.....	Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation
(2) CA-2.....	Notice of Occupational Disease and Claim for Compensation
(3) CA-2a.....	Notice of Employee's Recurrence of Disability and Claim for Pay/Compensation
(4) CA-5.....	Claim for Compensation by Widow, Widower and/or Children
(5) CA-5b.....	Claim for Compensation by Parents, Brothers, Sisters, Grandparents, or Grandchildren
(6) CA-6.....	Official Superior's Report of Employee's Death
(7) CA-7.....	Claim for Compensation Due to Traumatic Injury or Occupational Disease
(8) CA-7a.....	Time Analysis Form
(9) CA-7b.....	Leave Buy Back (LBB) Worksheet/Certification and Election
(10) CA-16.....	Authorization of Examination and/or Treatment

(11) CA-17..... Duty Status Report
(12) CA-20..... Attending Physician's Report

(b) Copies of the forms listed in this paragraph are available for public inspection at the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, Employment Standards Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20210. They may also be obtained from district offices, employers (i.e., safety and health offices, supervisors), and the Internet, at www.dol.gov/dol/esa/owcp.htm.

[63 FR 65306, Nov. 25, 1998; 63 FR 71202, Dec. 23, 1998]

Information in Program Records

Sec. 10.10 Are all documents relating to claims filed under the FECA considered confidential?

All records relating to claims for benefits, including copies of such records maintained by an employer, are considered confidential and may not be released, inspected, copied or otherwise disclosed except as provided in the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act of 1974.

Sec. 10.11 Who maintains custody and control of FECA records?

All records relating to claims for benefits filed under the FECA, including any copies of such records maintained by an employing agency, are covered by the government-wide Privacy Act system of records entitled DOL/GOVT-1 (Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, Federal Employees' Compensation Act File). This system of records is maintained by and under the control of OWCP, and, as such, all records covered by DOL/GOVT-1 are official records of OWCP. The protection, release, inspection and copying of records covered by DOL/GOVT-1 shall be accomplished in accordance with the rules, guidelines and provisions of this part, as well as those contained in 29 CFR parts 70 and 71, and with the notice of the system of records and routine uses published in the Federal Register. All questions relating to access/disclosure, and/or amendment of FECA records maintained by OWCP or the employing agency, are to be resolved in accordance with this section.

Sec. 10.12 How may a FECA claimant or beneficiary obtain copies of protected records?

(a) A claimant seeking copies of his or her official FECA file should address a request to the District Director of the OWCP office having custody of the file. A claimant seeking copies of FECA-related documents in the custody of the employer should follow the procedures established by that agency.

(b)(1) While an employing agency may establish procedures that an injured employee or beneficiary should follow in requesting access to documents it maintains, any decision issued in response to such a request must comply with the rules and regulations of the Department of Labor which govern all other aspects of safeguarding these records.

(2) No employing agency has the authority to issue determinations with respect to requests for the correction or amendment of records contained in or covered by DOL/GOVT-1. That authority is within the exclusive control of OWCP. Thus, any request for correction or amendment received by an employing agency must be referred to OWCP for review and decision.

(3) Any administrative appeal taken from a denial issued by the employing agency or OWCP shall be filed with the Solicitor of Labor in accordance with 29 CFR 71.7 and 71.9.

Sec. 10.13 What process is used by a person who wants to correct FECA-related documents?

Any request to amend a record covered by DOL/GOVT-1 should be directed to the district office having custody of the official file. No employer has the authority to issue determinations with regard to requests for the correction of records contained in or covered by DOL/GOVT-1. Any request for correction received by an employer must be referred to OWCP for review and decision.

Rights and Penalties

Sec. 10.15 May compensation rights be waived?

No employer or other person may require an employee or other claimant to enter into any agreement, either before or after an injury or death, to waive his or her right to claim compensation under the FECA. No waiver of compensation rights shall be valid.

Sec. 10.16 What criminal penalties may be imposed in connection with a claim under the FECA?

(a) A number of statutory provisions make it a crime to file a false or fraudulent claim or statement with the Government in connection with a claim under the FECA, or to wrongfully impede a FECA claim. Included among these provisions are sections 287, 1001, 1920, and 1922 of title 18, United States Code. Enforcement of these and other criminal provisions that may apply to claims under the FECA are within the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice.

(b) In addition, administrative proceedings may be initiated under the Program Fraud Civil Remedies Act of 1986 (PFCRA), 31 U.S.C. 3801-12, to impose civil penalties and assessments against persons who make, submit, or present, or cause to be made, submitted or presented, false, fictitious or fraudulent claims or written statements to OWCP in connection with a claim under the FECA. The Department of Labor's regulations implementing the PFCRA are found at 29 CFR part 22.

Sec. 10.17 Is a beneficiary who defrauds the Government in connection with a claim for benefits still entitled to those benefits?

When a beneficiary either pleads guilty to or is found guilty on either Federal or State criminal charges of defrauding the Federal Government in connection with a claim for benefits, the beneficiary's entitlement to any further compensation benefits will terminate effective the date either the guilty plea is accepted or a verdict of guilty is returned after trial, for any injury occurring on or before the date of such guilty plea or verdict. Termination of entitlement under this section is not affected by any subsequent change in or recurrence of the beneficiary's medical condition.

Sec. 10.18 Can a beneficiary who is incarcerated based on a felony conviction still receive benefits?

(a) Whenever a beneficiary is incarcerated in a State or Federal

jail, prison, penal institution or other correctional facility due to a State or Federal felony conviction, he or she forfeits all rights to compensation benefits during the period of incarceration. A beneficiary's right to compensation benefits for the period of his or her incarceration is not restored after such incarceration ends, even though payment of compensation benefits may resume.

(b) If the beneficiary has eligible dependents, OWCP will pay compensation to such dependents at a reduced rate during the period of his or her incarceration, by applying the percentages of 5 U.S.C. 8133(a)(1) through (5) to the beneficiary's gross current entitlement rather than to the beneficiary's monthly pay.

(c) If OWCP's decision on entitlement is pending when the period of incarceration begins, and compensation is due for a period of time prior to such incarceration, payment for that period will only be made to the beneficiary following his or her release.

Subpart B--Filing Notices and Claims; Submitting Evidence

Notices and Claims for Injury, Disease, and Death--Employee or Survivor's Actions

Sec. 10.100 How and when is a notice of traumatic injury filed?

(a) To claim benefits under the FECA, an employee who sustains a work-related traumatic injury must give notice of the injury in writing on Form CA-1, which may be obtained from the employer or from the Internet at www.dol.gov/dol/esa/owcp.htm. The employee must forward this notice to the employer. Another person, including the employer, may give notice of injury on the employee's behalf. The person submitting a notice shall include the Social Security Number (SSN) of the injured employee.

(b) For injuries sustained on or after September 7, 1974, a notice of injury must be filed within three years of the injury. (The form contains the necessary words of claim.) The requirements for filing notice are further described in 5 U.S.C. 8119. Also see Sec. 10.205 concerning time requirements for filing claims for continuation of pay.

(1) If the claim is not filed within three years, compensation may still be allowed if notice of injury was given within 30 days or the employer had actual knowledge of the injury or death within 30 days after occurrence. This knowledge may consist of written records or verbal notification. An entry into an employee's medical record may also satisfy this requirement if it is sufficient to place the employer on notice of a possible work-related injury or disease.

(2) OWCP may excuse failure to comply with the three-year time requirement because of truly exceptional circumstances (for example, being held prisoner of war).

(3) The claimant may withdraw his or her claim (but not the notice of injury) by so requesting in writing to OWCP at any time before OWCP determines eligibility for benefits. Any continuation of pay (COP) granted to an employee after a claim is withdrawn must be charged to sick or annual leave, or considered an overpayment of pay consistent with 5 U.S.C. 5584, at the employee's option.

(c) However, in cases of latent disability, the time for filing claim does not begin to run until the employee has a compensable disability and is aware, or reasonably should have been aware, of the causal relationship between the disability and the employment (see 5 U.S.C. 8122(b)).

Sec. 10.101 How and when is a notice of occupational disease filed?

(a) To claim benefits under the FECA, an employee who has a disease which he or she believes to be work-related must give notice of the condition in writing on Form CA-2, which may be obtained from the employer or from the Internet at www.dol.gov/dol/esa/owcp.htm. The

employee must forward this notice to the employer. Another person, including the employer, may do so on the employee's behalf. The person submitting a notice shall include the Social Security Number (SSN) of the injured employee. The claimant may withdraw his or her claim (but not the notice of occupational disease) by so requesting in writing to OWCP at any time before OWCP determines eligibility for benefits.

(b) For occupational diseases sustained as a result of exposure to injurious work factors that occurs on or after September 7, 1974, a notice of occupational disease must be filed within three years of the onset of the condition. (The form contains the necessary words of claim.) The requirements for timely filing are described in Sec. 10.100(b)(1) through (3).

(c) However, in cases of latent disability, the time for filing claim does not begin to run until the employee has a compensable disability and is aware, or reasonably should have been aware, of the causal relationship between the disability and the employment (see 5 U.S.C. 8122(b)).

Sec. 10.102 How and when is a claim for wage loss compensation filed?

(a) Form CA-7 is used to claim compensation for periods of disability not covered by COP.

(1) An employee who is disabled with loss of pay for more than three calendar days due to an injury, or someone acting on his or her behalf, must file Form CA-7 before compensation can be paid.

(2) The employee shall complete the front of Form CA-7 and submit the form to the employer for completion and transmission to OWCP. The form should be completed as soon as possible, but no more than 14 calendar days after the date pay stops due to the injury or disease.

(3) The requirements for filing claims are further described in 5 U.S.C. 8121.

(b) Additional Forms CA-7 are used to claim compensation for additional periods of disability after the first Form CA-7 is submitted to OWCP.

(1) It is the employee's responsibility to submit Form CA-7. Without receipt of such claim, OWCP has no knowledge of continuing wage loss. Therefore, while disability continues, the employee should submit a claim on Form CA-7 each two weeks until otherwise instructed by OWCP.

(2) The employee shall complete the front of Form CA-7 and submit the form to the employer for completion and transmission to OWCP.

(3) The employee is responsible for submitting, or arranging for the submittal of, medical evidence to OWCP which establishes both that disability continues and that the disability is due to the work-related injury. Form CA-20 is attached to Form CA-7 for this purpose.

[63 FR 65306, Nov. 25, 1998; 63 FR 71202, Dec. 23, 1998]

Sec. 10.103 How and when is a claim for permanent impairment filed?

Form CA-7 is used to claim compensation for impairment to a body part covered under the schedule established by 5 U.S.C. 8107. If Form CA-7 has already been filed to claim disability compensation, an employee may file a claim for such impairment by sending a letter to OWCP which specifies the nature of the benefit claimed.

Sec. 10.104 How and when is a claim for recurrence filed?

(a) A recurrence should be reported on Form CA-2a if it causes the

employee to lose time from work and incur a wage loss, or if the employee experiences a renewed need for treatment after previously being released from care. However, a notice of recurrence should not be filed when a new injury, new occupational disease, or new event contributing to an already-existing occupational disease has occurred. In these instances, the employee should file Form CA-1 or CA-2.

(b) The employee has the burden of establishing by the weight of reliable, probative and substantial evidence that the recurrence of disability is causally related to the original injury.

(1) The employee must include a detailed factual statement as described on Form CA-2a. The employer may submit comments concerning the employee's statement.

(2) The employee should arrange for the submittal of a detailed medical report from the attending physician as described on Form CA-2a. The employee should also submit, or arrange for the submittal of, similar medical reports for any examination and/or treatment received after returning to work following the original injury.

Sec. 10.105 How and when is a notice of death and claim for benefits filed?

(a) If an employee dies from a work-related traumatic injury or an occupational disease, any survivor may file a claim for death benefits using Form CA-5 or CA-5b, which may be obtained from the employer or from the Internet at www.dol.gov/dol/esa/owcp.htm. The survivor must provide this notice in writing and forward it to the employer. Another person, including the employer, may do so on the survivor's behalf. The survivor may also submit the completed Form CA-5 or CA-5b directly to OWCP. The survivor shall disclose the SSNs of all survivors on whose behalf claim for benefits is made in addition to the SSN of the deceased employee. The survivor may withdraw his or her claim (but not the notice of death) by so requesting in writing to OWCP at any time before OWCP determines eligibility for benefits.

(b) For deaths that occur on or after September 7, 1974, a notice of death must be filed within three years of the death. The form contains the necessary words of claim. The requirements for timely filing are described in Sec. 10.100(b)(1) through (3).

(c) However, in cases of death due to latent disability, the time for filing the claim does not begin to run until the survivor is aware, or reasonably should have been aware, of the causal relationship between the death and the employment (see 5 U.S.C. 8122(b)).

(d) The filing of a notice of injury or occupational disease will satisfy the time requirements for a death claim based on the same injury or occupational disease. If an injured employee or someone acting on the employee's behalf does not file a claim before the employee's death, the right to claim compensation for disability other than medical expenses ceases and does not survive.

(e) A survivor must be alive to receive any payment; there is no vested right to such payment. A report as described in Sec. 10.414 of this part must be filed once each year to support continuing payments of compensation.

Notices and Claims for Injury, Disease, and Death--Employer's Actions

Sec. 10.110 What should the employer do when an employee files a notice of traumatic injury or occupational disease?

(a) The employer shall complete the agency portion of Form CA-1 (for traumatic injury) or CA-2 (for occupational disease) no more than 10

working days after receipt of notice from the employee. The employer shall also complete the Receipt of Notice and give it to the employee, along with copies of both sides of Form CA-1 or Form CA-2.

(b) The employer must complete and transmit the form to OWCP within 10 working days after receipt of notice from the employee if the injury or disease will likely result in:

- (1) A medical charge against OWCP;
- (2) Disability for work beyond the day or shift of injury;
- (3) The need for more than two appointments for medical examination and/or treatment on separate days, leading to time loss from work;
- (4) Future disability;
- (5) Permanent impairment; or
- (6) Continuation of pay pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8118.

(c) The employer should not wait for submittal of supporting evidence before sending the form to OWCP.

(d) If none of the conditions in paragraph (b) of this section applies, the Form CA-1 or CA-2 shall be retained as a permanent record in the Employee Medical Folder in accordance with the guidelines established by the Office of Personnel Management.

Sec. 10.111 What should the employer do when an employee files an initial claim for compensation due to disability or permanent impairment?

(a) When an employee is disabled by a work-related injury and loses pay for more than three calendar days, or has a permanent impairment or serious disfigurement as described in 5 U.S.C. 8107, the employer shall furnish the employee with Form CA-7 for the purpose of claiming compensation.

(b) If the employee is receiving continuation of pay (COP), the employer should give Form CA-7 to the employee by the 30th day of the COP period and submit the form to OWCP by the 40th day of the COP period. If the employee has not returned the form to the employer by the 40th day of the COP period, the employer should ask him or her to submit it as soon as possible.

(c) Upon receipt of Form CA-7 from the employee, or someone acting on his or her behalf, the employer shall complete the appropriate portions of the form. As soon as possible, but no more than five working days after receipt from the employee, the employer shall forward the completed Form CA-7 and any accompanying medical report to OWCP.

Sec. 10.112 What should the employer do when an employee files a claim for continuing compensation due to disability?

(a) If the employee continues in a leave-without-pay status due to a work-related injury after the period of compensation initially claimed on Form CA-7, the employer shall furnish the employee with another Form CA-7 for the purpose of claiming continuing compensation.

(b) Upon receipt of Form CA-7 from the employee, or someone acting on his or her behalf, the employer shall complete the appropriate portions of the form. As soon as possible, but no more than five working days after receipt from the employee, the employer shall forward the completed Form CA-7 and any accompanying medical report to OWCP.

[63 FR 65306, Nov. 25, 1998; 63 FR 71202, Dec. 23, 1998]

Sec. 10.113 What should the employer do when an employee dies from a work-related injury or disease?

(a) The employer shall immediately report a death due to a work-related traumatic injury or occupational disease to OWCP by telephone, telegram, or facsimile (fax). No more than 10 working days after notification of the death, the employer shall complete and send Form CA-6 to OWCP.

(b) When possible, the employer shall furnish a Form CA-5 or CA-5b to all persons likely to be entitled to compensation for death of an employee. The employer should also supply information about completing and filing the form.

(c) The employer shall promptly transmit Form CA-5 or CA-5b to OWCP. The employer shall also promptly transmit to OWCP any other claim or paper submitted which appears to claim compensation on account of death.

Evidence and Burden of Proof

Sec. 10.115 What evidence is needed to establish a claim?

Forms CA-1, CA-2, CA-5 and CA-5b describe the basic evidence required. OWCP may send any request for additional evidence to the claimant and to his or her representative, if any. Evidence should be submitted in writing. The evidence submitted must be reliable, probative and substantial. Each claim for compensation must meet five requirements before OWCP can accept it. These requirements, which the employee must establish to meet his or her burden of proof, are as follows:

(a) The claim was filed within the time limits specified by the FECA;

(b) The injured person was, at the time of injury, an employee of the United States as defined in 5 U.S.C. 8101(1) and Sec. 10.5(h) of this part;

(c) The fact that an injury, disease or death occurred;

(d) The injury, disease or death occurred while the employee was in the performance of duty; and

(e) The medical condition for which compensation or medical benefits is claimed is causally related to the claimed injury, disease or death. Neither the fact that the condition manifests itself during a period of Federal employment, nor the belief of the claimant that factors of employment caused or aggravated the condition, is sufficient in itself to establish causal relationship.

(f) In all claims, the claimant is responsible for submitting, or arranging for submittal of, a medical report from the attending physician. For wage loss benefits, the claimant must also submit medical evidence showing that the condition claimed is disabling. The rules for submitting medical reports are found in Secs. 10.330 through 10.333.

Sec. 10.116 What additional evidence is needed in cases based on occupational disease?

(a) The employee must submit the specific detailed information described on Form CA-2 and on any checklist (Form CA-35, A-H) provided by the employer. OWCP has developed these checklists to address particular occupational diseases. The medical report should also include the information specified on the checklist for the particular disease claimed.

(b) The employer should submit the specific detailed information described on Form CA-2 and on any checklist pertaining to the claimed disease.

Sec. 10.117 What happens if, in any claim, the employer contests any of the facts as stated by the claimant?

(a) An employer who has reason to disagree with any aspect of the claimant's report shall submit a statement to OWCP that specifically describes the factual allegation or argument with which it disagrees and provide evidence or argument to support its position. The employer may include supporting documents such as witness statements, medical reports or records, or any other relevant information.

(b) Any such statement shall be submitted to OWCP with the notice of traumatic injury or death, or within 30 calendar days from the date notice of occupational disease or death is received from the claimant. If the employer does not submit a written explanation to support the disagreement, OWCP may accept the claimant's report of injury as established. The employer may not use a disagreement with an aspect of the claimant's report to delay forwarding the claim to OWCP or to compel or induce the claimant to change or withdraw the claim.

Sec. 10.118 Does the employer participate in the claims process in any other way?

(a) The employer is responsible for submitting to OWCP all relevant and probative factual and medical evidence in its possession, or which it may acquire through investigation or other means. Such evidence may be submitted at any time.

(b) The employer may ascertain the events surrounding an injury and the extent of disability where it appears that an employee who alleges total disability may be performing other work, or may be engaging in activities which would indicate less than total disability. This authority is in addition to that given in Sec. 10.118(a). However, the provisions of the Privacy Act apply to any endeavor by the employer to ascertain the facts of the case (see Secs. 10.10 and 10.11).

(c) The employer does not have the right, except as provided in subpart C of this part, to actively participate in the claims adjudication process.

Sec. 10.119 What action will OWCP take with respect to information submitted by the employer?

OWCP will consider all evidence submitted appropriately, and OWCP will inform the employee, the employee's representative, if any, and the employer of any action taken. Where an employer contests a claim within 30 days of the initial submittal and the claim is later approved, OWCP will notify the employer of the rationale for approving the claim.

Sec. 10.120 May a claimant submit additional evidence?

A claimant or a person acting on his or her behalf may submit to OWCP at any time any other evidence relevant to the claim.

Sec. 10.121 What happens if OWCP needs more evidence from the claimant?

If the claimant submits factual evidence, medical evidence, or both, but OWCP determines that this evidence is not sufficient to meet the burden of proof, OWCP will inform the claimant of the additional evidence needed. The claimant will be allowed at least 30 days to submit the evidence required. OWCP is not required to notify the claimant a second time if the evidence submitted in response to its first request is not sufficient to meet the burden of proof.

Sec. 10.125 How does OWCP determine entitlement to benefits?

(a) In reaching any decision with respect to FECA coverage or entitlement, OWCP considers the claim presented by the claimant, the report by the employer, and the results of such investigation as OWCP may deem necessary.

(b) OWCP claims staff apply the law, the regulations, and its procedures to the facts as reported or obtained upon investigation. They also apply decisions of the Employees' Compensation Appeals Board and administrative decisions of OWCP as set forth in FECA Program Memoranda.

Sec. 10.126 What does the decision contain?

The decision shall contain findings of fact and a statement of reasons. It is accompanied by information about the claimant's appeal rights, which may include the right to a hearing, a reconsideration, and/or a review by the Employees' Compensation Appeals Board. (See subpart G of this part.)

Sec. 10.127 To whom is the decision sent?

A copy of the decision shall be mailed to the employee's last known address. If the employee has a designated representative before OWCP, a copy of the decision will also be mailed to the representative. Notification to either the employee or the representative will be considered notification to both. A copy of the decision will also be sent to the employer.

Subpart C--Continuation of Pay

Sec. 10.200 What is continuation of pay?

(a) For most employees who sustain a traumatic injury, the FECA provides that the employer must continue the employee's regular pay during any periods of resulting disability, up to a maximum of 45 calendar days. This is called continuation of pay, or COP. The employer, not OWCP, pays COP. Unlike wage loss benefits, COP is subject to taxes and all other payroll deductions that are made from regular income.

(b) The employer must continue the pay of an employee who is eligible for COP, and may not require the employee to use his or her own sick or annual leave, unless the provisions of Secs. 10.200(c), 10.220, or Sec. 10.222 apply. However, while continuing the employee's pay, the employer may controvert the employee's COP entitlement pending a final determination by OWCP. OWCP has the exclusive authority to determine questions of entitlement and all other issues relating to COP.

(c) The FECA excludes certain persons from eligibility for COP. COP cannot be authorized for members of these excluded groups, which include but are not limited to: persons rendering personal service to the United States similar to the service of a civil officer or employee of the United States, without pay or for nominal pay; volunteers (for instance, in the Civil Air Patrol and Peace Corps); Job Corps and Youth Conservation Corps enrollees; individuals in work-study programs, and grand or petit jurors (unless otherwise Federal employees).

Eligibility for COP

Sec. 10.205 What conditions must be met to receive COP?

(a) To be eligible for COP, a person must:

(1) Have a ``traumatic injury'' as defined at Sec. 10.5(ee) which is job-related and the cause of the disability, and/or the cause of lost time due to the need for medical examination and treatment;

(2) File Form CA-1 within 30 days of the date of the injury (but if that form is not available, using another form would not alone preclude receipt); and

(3) Begin losing time from work due to the traumatic injury within 45 days of the injury.

(b) OWCP may find that the employee is not entitled to COP for other reasons consistent with the statute (see Sec. 10.220).

Sec. 10.206 May an employee who uses leave after an injury later decide to use COP instead?

On Form CA-1, an employee may elect to use accumulated sick or annual leave, or leave advanced by the agency, instead of electing COP. The employee can change the election between leave and COP for prospective periods at any point while eligibility for COP remains. The employee may also change the election for past periods and request COP in lieu of leave already taken for the same period. In either situation, the following provisions apply:

(a) The request must be made to the employer within one year of the date the leave was used or the date of the written approval of the claim by OWCP (if written approval is issued), whichever is later.

(b) Where the employee is otherwise eligible, the agency shall restore leave taken in lieu of any of the 45 COP days. Where any of the 45 COP days remain unused, the agency shall continue pay prospectively.

(c) The use of leave may not be used to delay or extend the 45-day COP period or to otherwise affect the time limitation as provided by 5 U.S.C. 8117. Therefore, any leave used during the period of eligibility counts towards the 45-day maximum entitlement to COP.

Sec. 10.207 May an employee who returns to work, then stops work again due to the effects of the injury, receive COP?

If the employee recovers from disability and returns to work, then becomes disabled again and stops work, the employer shall pay any of the 45 days of entitlement to COP not used during the initial period of disability where:

(a) The employee completes Form CA-2a and elects to receive regular pay;

(b) OWCP did not deny the original claim for disability;

(c) The disability recurs and the employee stops work within 45 days of the time the employee first returned to work following the initial period of disability; and

(d) Pay has not been continued for the entire 45 days.

Responsibilities

Sec. 10.210 What are the employee's responsibilities in COP cases?

An employee who sustains a traumatic injury which he or she considers disabling, or someone authorized to act on his or her behalf, must take the following actions to ensure continuing eligibility for COP. The employee must:

(a) Complete and submit Form CA-1 to the employing agency as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days from the date the traumatic injury occurred.

(b) Ensure that medical evidence supporting disability resulting from the claimed traumatic injury, including a statement as to when the employee can return to his or her date of injury job, is provided to the employer within 10 calendar days after filing the claim for COP.

(c) Ensure that relevant medical evidence is submitted to OWCP, and cooperate with OWCP in developing the claim.

(d) Ensure that the treating physician specifies work limitations and provides them to the employer and/or representatives of OWCP.

(e) Provide to the treating physician a description of any specific alternative positions offered the employee, and ensure that the treating physician responds promptly to the employer and/or OWCP, with an opinion as to whether and how soon the employee could perform that or any other specific position.

Sec. 10.211 What are the employer's responsibilities in COP cases?

Once the employer learns of a traumatic injury sustained by an employee, it shall:

(a) Provide a Form CA-1 and Form CA-16 to authorize medical care in accordance with Sec. 10.300. Failure to do so may mean that OWCP will not uphold any termination of COP by the employer.

(b) Advise the employee of the right to receive COP, and the need to elect among COP, annual or sick leave or leave without pay, for any period of disability.

(c) Inform the employee of any decision to controvert COP and/or terminate pay, and the basis for doing so.

(d) Complete Form CA-1 and transmit it, along with all other available pertinent information, (including the basis for any controversion), to OWCP within 10 working days after receiving the completed form from the employee.

Calculation of COP

Sec. 10.215 How does OWCP compute the number of days of COP used?

COP is payable for a maximum of 45 calendar days, and every day used is counted toward this maximum. The following rules apply:

(a) Time lost on the day or shift of the injury does not count toward COP. (Instead, the agency must keep the employee in a pay status for that period);

(b) The first COP day is the first day disability begins following the date of injury (providing it is within the 45 days following the date of injury), except where the injury occurs before the beginning of the work day or shift, in which case the date of injury is charged to COP;

(c) Any part of a day or shift (except for the day of the injury) counts as a full day toward the 45 calendar day total;

(d) Regular days off are included if COP has been used on the regular work days immediately preceding or following the regular day(s) off, and medical evidence supports disability; and

(e) Leave used during a period when COP is otherwise payable is counted toward the 45-day COP maximum as if the employee had been in a COP status.

(f) For employees with part-time or intermittent schedules, all calendar days on which medical evidence indicates disability are counted

as COP days, regardless of whether the employee was or would have been scheduled to work on those days. The rate at which COP is paid for these employees is calculated according to Sec. 10.216(b).

[63 FR 65306, Nov. 25, 1998; 63 FR 71202, Dec. 23, 1998]

Sec. 10.216 How is the pay rate for COP calculated?

The employer shall calculate COP using the period of time and the weekly pay rate.

(a) The pay rate for COP purposes is equal to the employee's regular ``weekly'' pay (the average of the weekly pay over the preceding 52 weeks).

(1) The pay rate excludes overtime pay, but includes other applicable extra pay except to the extent prohibited by law.

(2) Changes in pay or salary (for example, promotion, demotion, within-grade increases, termination of a temporary detail, etc.) which would have otherwise occurred during the 45-day period are to be reflected in the weekly pay determination.

(b) The weekly pay for COP purposes is determined according to the following formulas:

(1) For full or part-time workers (permanent or temporary) who work the same number of hours each week of the year (or of the appointment), the weekly pay rate is the hourly pay rate (A) in effect on the date of injury multiplied by (x) the number of hours worked each week (B): $A \times B = \text{Weekly Pay Rate}$.

(2) For part-time workers (permanent or temporary) who do not work the same number of hours each week, but who do work each week of the year (or period of appointment), the weekly pay rate is an average of the weekly earnings, established by dividing (<divide>) the total earnings (excluding overtime) from the year immediately preceding the injury (A) by the number of weeks (or partial weeks) worked in that year (B): $A \text{ <divide> } B = \text{Weekly Pay Rate}$.

(3) For intermittent and seasonal workers, whether permanent or temporary, who do not work either the same number of hours or every week of the year (or period of appointment), the weekly pay rate is the average weekly earnings established by dividing (<divide>) the total earnings during the full 12-month period immediately preceding the date of injury (excluding overtime) (A), by the number of weeks (or partial weeks) worked during that year (B) (that is, $A \text{ <divide> } B$); or 150 times the average daily wage earned in the employment during the days employed within the full year immediately preceding the date of injury divided by 52 weeks, whichever is greater.

[63 FR 65306, Nov. 25, 1998; 63 FR 71202, Dec. 23, 1998]

Sec. 10.217 Is COP charged if the employee continues to work, but in a different job that pays less?

If the employee cannot perform the duties of his or her regular position, but instead works in another job with different duties with no loss in pay, then COP is not chargeable. COP must be paid and the days counted against the 45 days authorized by law whenever an actual reduction of pay results from the injury, including a reduction of pay for the employee's normal administrative workweek that results from a change or diminution in his or her duties following an injury. However, this does not include a reduction of pay that is due solely to an employer being prohibited by law from paying extra pay to an employee

for work he or she does not actually perform.

Controversion and Termination of COP

Sec. 10.220 When is an employer not required to pay COP?

An employer shall continue the regular pay of an eligible employee without a break in time for up to 45 calendar days, except when, and only when:

- (a) The disability was not caused by a traumatic injury;
- (b) The employee is not a citizen of the United States or Canada;
- (c) No written claim was filed within 30 days from the date of injury;
- (d) The injury was not reported until after employment has been terminated;
- (e) The injury occurred off the employing agency's premises and was otherwise not within the performance of official duties;
- (f) The injury was caused by the employee's willful misconduct, intent to injure or kill himself or herself or another person, or was proximately caused by intoxication by alcohol or illegal drugs; or
- (g) Work did not stop until more than 45 days following the injury.

[63 FR 65306, Nov. 25, 1998; 64 FR 12684, Mar. 12, 1999]

Sec. 10.221 How is a claim for COP controverted?

When the employer stops an employee's pay for one of the reasons cited in Sec. 10.220, the employer must controvert the claim for COP on Form CA-1, explaining in detail the basis for the refusal. The final determination on entitlement to COP always rests with OWCP.

Sec. 10.222 When may an employer terminate COP which has already begun?

(a) Where the employer has continued the pay of the employee, it may be stopped only when at least one of the following circumstances is present:

(1) Medical evidence which on its face supports disability due to a work-related injury is not received within 10 calendar days after the claim is submitted (unless the employer's own investigation shows disability to exist). Where the medical evidence is later provided, however, COP shall be reinstated retroactive to the date of termination;

(2) The medical evidence from the treating physician shows that the employee is not disabled from his or her regular position;

(3) Medical evidence from the treating physician shows that the employee is not totally disabled, and the employee refuses a written offer of a suitable alternative position which is approved by the attending physician. If OWCP later determines that the position was not suitable, OWCP will direct the employer to grant the employee COP retroactive to the termination date.

(4) The employee returns to work with no loss of pay;

(5) The employee's period of employment expires or employment is otherwise terminated (as established prior to the date of injury);

(6) OWCP directs the employer to stop COP; and/or

(7) COP has been paid for 45 calendar days.

(b) An employer may not interrupt or stop COP to which the employee is otherwise entitled because of a disciplinary action, unless a preliminary notice was issued to the employee before the date of injury and the action becomes final or otherwise takes effect during the COP

period.

(c) An employer cannot otherwise stop COP unless it does so for one of the reasons found in this section or Sec. 10.220. Where an employer stops COP, it must file a controversion with OWCP, setting forth the basis on which it terminated COP, no later than the effective date of the termination.

Sec. 10.223 Are there other circumstances under which OWCP will not authorize payment of COP?

When OWCP finds that an employee or his or her representative refuses or obstructs a medical examination required by OWCP, the right to COP is suspended until the refusal or obstruction ceases. COP already paid or payable for the period of suspension is forfeited. If already paid, the COP may be charged to annual or sick leave or considered an overpayment of pay consistent with 5 U.S.C. 5584.

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Sec. 10.224 What happens if OWCP finds that the employee is not entitled to COP after it has been paid?

Where OWCP finds that the employee is not entitled to COP after it has been paid, the employee may chose to have the time charged to annual or sick leave, or considered an overpayment of pay under 5 U.S.C. 5584. The employer must correct any deficiencies in COP as directed by OWCP.

Subpart D--Medical and Related Benefits

Emergency Medical Care

Sec. 10.300 What are the basic rules for authorizing emergency medical care?

(a) When an employee sustains a work-related traumatic injury that requires medical examination, medical treatment, or both, the employer shall authorize such examination and/or treatment by issuing a Form CA-16. This form may be used for occupational disease or illness only if the employer has obtained prior permission from OWCP.

(b) The employer shall issue Form CA-16 within four hours of the claimed injury. If the employer gives verbal authorization for such care, he or she should issue a Form CA-16 within 48 hours. The employer is not required to issue a Form CA-16 more than one week after the occurrence of the claimed injury. The employer may not authorize examination or medical or other treatment in any case that OWCP has disallowed.

(c) Form CA-16 must contain the full name and address of the qualified physician or qualified medical facility authorized to provide service. The authorizing official must sign and date the form and must state his or her title. Form CA-16 authorizes treatment for 60 days from the date of issuance, unless OWCP terminates the authorization sooner.

(d) The employer should advise the employee of the right to his or her initial choice of physician. The employer shall allow the employee to select a qualified physician, after advising him or her of those physicians excluded under subpart I of this part. The physician may be in private practice, including a health maintenance organization (HMO), or employed by a Federal agency such as the Department of the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Veterans Affairs. Any qualified physician may provide initial treatment of a work-related injury in an emergency. See also Sec. 10.825(b).

Sec. 10.301 May the physician designated on Form CA-16 refer the employee to another medical specialist or medical facility?

The physician designated on Form CA-16 may refer the employee for

further examination, testing, or medical care. OWCP will pay this physician or facility's bill on the authority of Form CA-16. The employer should not issue a second Form CA-16.

Sec. 10.302 Should the employer authorize medical care if he or she doubts that the injury occurred, or that it is work-related?

If the employer doubts that the injury occurred, or that it is work-related, he or she should authorize medical care by completing Form CA-16 and checking block 6B of the form. If the medical and factual evidence sent to OWCP shows that the condition treated is not work-related, OWCP will notify the employee, the employer, and the physician or hospital that OWCP will not authorize payment for any further treatment.

Sec. 10.303 Should the employer use a Form CA-16 to authorize medical testing when an employee is exposed to a workplace hazard just once?

(a) Simple exposure to a workplace hazard, such as an infectious agent, does not constitute a work-related injury entitling an employee to medical treatment under the FECA. The employer therefore should not use a Form CA-16 to authorize medical testing for an employee who has merely been exposed to a workplace hazard, unless the employee has sustained an identifiable injury or medical condition as a result of that exposure. OWCP will authorize preventive treatment only under certain well-defined circumstances (see Sec. 10.313).

(b) Employers may be required under other statutes or regulations to provide their employees with medical testing and/or other services in situations described in paragraph (a) of this section. For example, regulations issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at 29 CFR chapter XVII require employers to provide their employees with medical consultations and/or examinations when they either exhibit symptoms consistent with exposure to a workplace hazard, or when an identifiable event such as a spill, leak or explosion occurs and results in the likelihood of exposure to a workplace hazard. In addition, 5 U.S.C. 7901 authorizes employers to establish health programs whose staff can perform tests for workplace hazards, counsel employees for exposure or feared exposure to such hazards, and provide health care screening and other associated services.

Sec. 10.304 Are there any exceptions to these procedures for obtaining medical care?

In cases involving emergencies or unusual circumstances, OWCP may authorize treatment in a manner other than as stated in this subpart.

Medical Treatment and Related Issues

Sec. 10.310 What are the basic rules for obtaining medical care?

(a) The employee is entitled to receive all medical services, appliances or supplies which a qualified physician prescribes or recommends and which OWCP considers necessary to treat the work-related injury. The employee need not be disabled to receive such treatment. If there is any doubt as to whether a specific service, appliance or supply is necessary to treat the work-related injury, the employee should consult OWCP prior to obtaining it.

(b) Any qualified physician or qualified hospital may provide such services, appliances and supplies. A qualified provider of medical support services may also furnish appropriate services, appliances, and supplies. OWCP may apply a test of cost-effectiveness to appliances and supplies. With respect to prescribed medications, OWCP may require the use of generic equivalents where they are available.

Sec. 10.311 What are the special rules for the services of chiropractors?

(a) The services of chiropractors that may be reimbursed are limited by the FECA to treatment to correct a spinal subluxation. The costs of physical and related laboratory tests performed by or required by a chiropractor to diagnose such a subluxation are also payable.

(b) In accordance with 5 U.S.C. 8101(3), a diagnosis of spinal ``subluxation as demonstrated by X-ray to exist'' must appear in the chiropractor's report before OWCP can consider payment of a chiropractor's bill.

(c) A chiropractor may interpret his or her x-rays to the same extent as any other physician. To be given any weight, the medical report must state that x-rays support the finding of spinal subluxation. OWCP will not necessarily require submittal of the x-ray, or a report of the x-ray, but the report must be available for submittal on request.

(d) A chiropractor may also provide services in the nature of physical therapy under the direction of a qualified physician.

Sec. 10.312 What are the special rules for the services of clinical psychologists?

A clinical psychologist may serve as a physician only within the scope of his or her practice as defined by State law. Therefore, a clinical psychologist may not serve as a physician for conditions that include a physical component unless the applicable State law allows clinical psychologists to treat physical conditions. A clinical psychologist may also perform testing, evaluation and other services under the direction of a qualified physician.

Sec. 10.313 Will OWCP pay for preventive treatment?

The FECA does not authorize payment for preventive measures such as vaccines and inoculations, and in general, preventive treatment may be a responsibility of the employing agency under the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 7901

(see Sec. 10.303). However, OWCP can authorize treatment for the following conditions, even though such treatment is designed, in part, to prevent further injury:

(a) Complications of preventive measures which are provided or sponsored by the agency, such as an adverse reaction to prophylactic immunization.

(b) Actual or probable exposure to a known contaminant due to an injury, thereby requiring disease-specific measures against infection. Examples include the provision of tetanus antitoxin or booster toxoid injections for puncture wounds; administration of rabies vaccine for a bite from a rabid or potentially rabid animal; or appropriate measures where exposure to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has occurred.

(c) Conversion of tuberculin reaction from negative to positive

following exposure to tuberculosis in the performance of duty. In this situation, the appropriate therapy may be authorized.

(d) Where injury to one eye has resulted in loss of vision, periodic examination of the uninjured eye to detect possible sympathetic involvement of the uninjured eye at an early stage.

Sec. 10.314 Will OWCP pay for the services of an attendant?

Yes, OWCP will pay for the services of an attendant up to a maximum of \$1,500 per month, where the need for such services has been medically documented. In the exercise of the discretion afforded by 5 U.S.C. 8111(a), the Director has determined that, except where payments were being made prior to January 4, 1999, direct payments to the claimant to cover such services will no longer be made. Rather, the cost of providing attendant services will be paid under section 8103 of the Act, and medical bills for these services will be considered under Sec. 10.801. This decision is based on the following factors:

(a) The additional payments authorized under section 8111(a) should not be necessary since OWCP will authorize payment for personal care services under 5 U.S.C. 8103, whether or not such care includes medical services, so long as the personal care services have been determined to be medically necessary and are provided by a home health aide, licensed practical nurse, or similarly trained individual.

(b) A home health aide, licensed practical nurse, or similarly trained individual is better able to provide quality personal care services, including assistance in feeding, bathing, and using the toilet. In the past, provision of supplemental compensation directly to injured employees may have encouraged family members to take on these responsibilities even though they may not have been trained to provide such services. By paying for the services under section 8103, OWCP can better determine whether the services provided are necessary and/or adequate to meet the needs of the injured employee. In addition, a system requiring the personal care provider to submit a bill to OWCP, where the amount billed will be subject to OWCP's fee schedule, will result in greater fiscal accountability.

Sec. 10.315 Will OWCP pay for transportation to obtain medical treatment?

The employee is entitled to reimbursement of reasonable and necessary expenses, including transportation needed to obtain authorized medical services, appliances or supplies. To determine what is a reasonable distance to travel, OWCP will consider the availability of services, the employee's condition, and the means of transportation. Generally, 25 miles from the place of injury, the work site, or the employee's home, is considered a reasonable distance to travel. The standard form designated for Federal employees to claim travel expenses should be used to seek reimbursement under this section.

Sec. 10.316 After selecting a treating physician, may an employee choose to be treated by another physician instead?

(a) When the physician originally selected to provide treatment for a work-related injury refers the employee to a specialist for further medical care, the employee need not consult OWCP for approval. In all other instances, however, the employee must submit a written request to OWCP with his or her reasons for desiring a change of physician.

(b) OWCP will approve the request if it determines that the reasons

submitted are sufficient. Requests that are often approved include those for transfer of care from a general practitioner to a physician who

specializes in treating conditions like the work-related one, or the need for a new physician when an employee has moved. The employer may not authorize a change of physicians.

Directed Medical Examinations

Sec. 10.320 Can OWCP require an employee to be examined by another physician?

OWCP sometimes needs a second opinion from a medical specialist. The employee must submit to examination by a qualified physician as often and at such times and places as OWCP considers reasonably necessary. The employee may have a qualified physician, paid by him or her, present at such examination. However, the employee is not entitled to have anyone else present at the examination unless OWCP decides that exceptional circumstances exist. For example, where a hearing-impaired employee needs an interpreter, the presence of an interpreter would be allowed. Also, OWCP may send a case file for second opinion review where actual examination is not needed, or where the employee is deceased.

Sec. 10.321 What happens if the opinion of the physician selected by OWCP differs from the opinion of the physician selected by the employee?

(a) If one medical opinion holds more probative value, OWCP will base its determination of entitlement on that medical conclusion (see Sec. 10.502). A difference in medical opinion sufficient to be considered a conflict occurs when two reports of virtually equal weight and rationale reach opposing conclusions (see James P. Roberts, 31 ECAB 1010 (1980)).

(b) If a conflict exists between the medical opinion of the employee's physician and the medical opinion of either a second opinion physician or an OWCP medical adviser or consultant, OWCP shall appoint a third physician to make an examination (see Sec. 10.502). This is called a referee examination. OWCP will select a physician who is qualified in the appropriate specialty and who has had no prior connection with the case. The employee is not entitled to have anyone present at the examination unless OWCP decides that exceptional circumstances exist. For example, where a hearing-impaired employee needs an interpreter, the presence of an interpreter would be allowed. Also, a case file may be sent for referee medical review where there is no need for an actual examination, or where the employee is deceased.

Sec. 10.322 Who pays for second opinion and referee examinations?

OWCP will pay second opinion and referee medical specialists directly. OWCP will reimburse the employee all necessary and reasonable expenses incident to such an examination, including transportation costs and actual wages lost for the time needed to submit to an examination required by OWCP.

Sec. 10.323 What are the penalties for failing to report for or obstructing a second opinion or referee examination?

If an employee refuses to submit to or in any way obstructs an examination required by OWCP, his or her right to compensation under the FECA is suspended until such refusal or obstruction stops. The action of the employee's representative is considered to be the action of the

employee for purposes of this section. The employee will forfeit compensation otherwise paid or payable under the FECA for the period of the refusal or obstruction, and any compensation already paid for that period will be declared an overpayment and will be subject to recovery pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8129.

Sec. 10.324 May an employer require an employee to undergo a physical examination in connection with a work-related injury?

The employer may have authority independent of the FECA to require the employee to undergo a medical examination to determine whether he or she meets the medical requirements of the position held or can perform the duties of that position. Nothing in the FECA or in this part affects such authority. However, no agency-required examination or related activity shall interfere with the employee's initial choice of physician or the provision of any authorized examination or treatment, including the issuance of Form CA-16.

Medical Reports

Sec. 10.330 What are the requirements for medical reports?

In all cases reported to OWCP, a medical report from the attending physician is required. This report should include:

- (a) Dates of examination and treatment;
- (b) History given by the employee;
- (c) Physical findings;
- (d) Results of diagnostic tests;
- (e) Diagnosis;
- (f) Course of treatment;
- (g) A description of any other conditions found but not due to the claimed injury;
- (h) The treatment given or recommended for the claimed injury;
- (i) The physician's opinion, with medical reasons, as to causal relationship between the diagnosed condition(s) and the factors or conditions of the employment;
- (j) The extent of disability affecting the employee's ability to work due to the injury;
- (k) The prognosis for recovery; and
- (l) All other material findings.

Sec. 10.331 How and when should the medical report be submitted?

(a) Form CA-16 may be used for the initial medical report, while Form CA-20 may be used for the initial report and for subsequent reports, including where continued compensation is claimed. Use of medical report forms is not required, however. The report may also be made in narrative form on the physician's letterhead stationery. The report should bear the physician's signature or signature stamp. OWCP may require an original signature on the report.

(b) The report shall be submitted directly to OWCP as soon as possible after medical examination or treatment is received, either by the employee or the physician. (See also Sec. 10.210.) The employer may request a copy of the report from OWCP. The employer should use Form CA-17 to obtain interim reports concerning the duty status of an employee with a disabling injury.

Sec. 10.332 What additional medical information will OWCP require to support continuing payment of benefits?

In all cases of serious injury or disease, especially those requiring hospital treatment or prolonged care, OWCP will request detailed narrative reports from the attending physician at periodic intervals. The physician will be asked to describe continuing medical treatment for the condition accepted by OWCP, a prognosis, a description of work limitations, if any, and the physician's opinion as to the continuing causal relationship between the employee's condition and factors of his or her Federal employment.

Sec. 10.333 What additional medical information will OWCP require to support a claim for a schedule award?

To support a claim for a schedule award, a medical report must contain accurate measurements of the function of the organ or member, in accordance with the American Medical Association's Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment. These measurements may include: The actual degree of loss of active or passive motion or deformity; the amount of atrophy; the decrease, if any, in strength; the disturbance of sensation; and pain due to nerve impairment.

Medical Bills

Sec. 10.335 How are medical bills submitted?

Usually, medical providers submit bills directly to OWCP. The rules for submitting and paying bills are stated in subpart I of this part. An employee claiming reimbursement of medical expenses should submit an itemized bill as described in Sec. 10.802.

Sec. 10.336 What are the time frames for submitting bills?

To be considered for payment, bills must be submitted by the end of the calendar year after the year when the expense was incurred, or by the end of the calendar year after the year when OWCP first accepted the claim as compensable, whichever is later.

Sec. 10.337 If OWCP reimburses an employee only partially for a medical expense, must the provider refund the balance of the amount paid to the employee?

(a) The OWCP fee schedule sets maximum limits on the amounts payable for many services (see Sec. 10.805). The employee may be only partially reimbursed for medical expenses because the amount he or she paid to the medical provider for a service exceeds the maximum allowable charge set by the OWCP fee schedule.

(b) If this happens, OWCP shall advise the employee of the maximum allowable charge for the service in question and of his or her responsibility to ask the provider to refund to the employee, or credit to the employee's account, the amount he or she paid which exceeds the maximum allowable charge. The provider may request reconsideration of the fee determination as set forth in Sec. 10.812.

(c) If the provider does not refund to the employee or credit to his or her account the amount of money paid in excess of the charge which OWCP allows, the employee should submit documentation of the attempt to obtain such refund or credit to OWCP. OWCP may make reasonable

reimbursement to the employee after reviewing the facts and circumstances of the case.

Subpart E--Compensation and Related Benefits

Compensation for Disability and Impairment

Sec. 10.400 What is total disability?

(a) Permanent total disability is presumed to result from the loss of use of both hands, both arms, both feet, or both legs, or the loss of sight of both eyes. However, the presumption of permanent total disability as a result of such loss may be rebutted by evidence to the contrary, such as evidence of continued ability to work and to earn wages despite the loss.

(b) Temporary total disability is defined as the inability to return to the position held at the time of injury or earn equivalent wages, or to perform other gainful employment, due to the work-related injury. Except as presumed under paragraph (a) of this section, an employee's disability status is always considered temporary pending return to work.

Sec. 10.401 When and how is compensation for total disability paid?

(a) Compensation is payable when the employee starts to lose pay if the injury causes permanent disability or if pay loss continues for more than 14 calendar days. Otherwise, compensation is payable on the fourth day after pay stops. Compensation may not be paid while an injured employee is in a continuation of pay status or receives pay for leave.

(b) Compensation for total disability is payable at the rate of $66\frac{2}{3}\%$ percent of the pay rate if the employee has no dependents, or 75 percent of the pay rate if the employee has at least one dependent. (''Dependents'' are defined at 5 U.S.C. 8110(a).)

Sec. 10.402 What is partial disability?

An injured employee who cannot return to the position held at the time of injury (or earn equivalent wages) due to the work-related injury, but who is not totally disabled for all gainful employment, is considered to be partially disabled.

Sec. 10.403 When and how is compensation for partial disability paid?

(a) 5 U.S.C. 8115 outlines how compensation for partial disability is determined. If the employee has actual earnings which fairly and reasonably represent his or her wage-earning capacity, those earnings may form the basis for payment of compensation for partial disability. (See Secs. 10.500 through 10.520 concerning return to work.) If the employee's actual earnings do not fairly and reasonably represent his or her wage-earning capacity, or if the employee has no actual earnings, OWCP uses the factors stated in 5 U.S.C. 8115 to select a position which represents his or her wage-earning capacity. However, OWCP will not secure employment for the employee in the position selected for establishing a wage-earning capacity.

(b) Compensation for partial disability is payable as a percentage of the difference between the employee's pay rate for compensation purposes and the employee's wage-earning capacity. The percentage is $66\frac{2}{3}\%$ percent of this difference if the employee has no dependents, or 75 percent of this difference if the employee has at least one

dependent.

(c) The formula which OWCP uses to compute the compensation payable for partial disability employs the following terms: Pay rate for compensation purposes, which is defined in Sec. 10.5(s) of this part; current pay rate, which means the salary or wages for the job held at the time of injury at the time of the determination; and earnings, which means the employee's actual earnings, or the salary or pay rate of the position selected by OWCP as representing the employee's wage-earning capacity.

(d) The employee's wage-earning capacity in terms of percentage is computed by dividing the employee's earnings by the current pay rate. The comparison of earnings and ``current'' pay rate for the job held at the time of injury need not be made as of the beginning of partial disability. OWCP may use any convenient date for making the comparison as long as both wage rates are in effect on the date used for comparison.

(e) The employee's wage-earning capacity in terms of dollars is computed by first multiplying the pay rate for compensation purposes by the percentage of wage-earning capacity. The resulting dollar amount is then subtracted from the pay rate for compensation purposes to obtain the employee's loss of wage-earning capacity.

Sec. 10.404 When and how is compensation for a schedule impairment paid?

Compensation is provided for specified periods of time for the permanent loss or loss of use of certain members, organs and functions of the body. Such loss or loss of use is known as permanent impairment. Compensation for proportionate periods of time is payable for partial loss or loss of use of each member, organ or function. OWCP evaluates the degree of impairment to schedule members, organs and functions as defined in 5 U.S.C. 8107 according to the standards set forth in the specified (by OWCP) edition of the American Medical Association's Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment.

(a) 5 U.S.C. 8107(c) provides a list of schedule members. Pursuant to the authority provided by 5 U.S.C. 8107(c)(22), the Secretary has added the following organs to the compensation schedule for injuries that were sustained on or after September 7, 1974:

Member	Weeks
Breast (one).....	52
Kidney (one).....	156
Larynx.....	160
Lung (one).....	156
Penis.....	205
Testicle (one).....	52
Tongue.....	160
Ovary (one).....	52
Uterus/cervix and vulva/vagina.....	205

(b) Compensation for schedule awards is payable at 66 2/3 percent of the employee's pay, or 75 percent of the pay when the employee has at least one dependent.

(c) The period of compensation payable under 5 U.S.C. 8107(c) shall be reduced by the period of compensation paid or payable under the

schedule for an earlier injury if:

(1) Compensation in both cases is for impairment of the same member or function or different parts of the same member or function, or for disfigurement; and

(2) OWCP finds that compensation payable for the later impairment in whole or in part would duplicate the compensation payable for the pre-existing impairment.

(d) Compensation not to exceed \$3,500 may be paid for serious disfigurement of the face, head or neck which is likely to handicap a person in securing or maintaining employment.

Sec. 10.405 Who is considered a dependent in a claim based on disability or impairment?

(a) Dependents include a wife or husband; an unmarried child under 18 years of age; an unmarried child over 18 who is incapable of self-support; a student, until he or she reaches 23 years of age or completes four years of school beyond the high school level; or a wholly dependent parent.

(b) Augmented compensation payable for an unmarried child, which would otherwise terminate when the child reached the age of 18, may be continued while the child is a student as defined in 5 U.S.C. 8101(17).

Sec. 10.406 What are the maximum and minimum rates of compensation in disability cases?

(a) Compensation for total or partial disability may not exceed 75 percent of the basic monthly pay of the highest step of grade 15 of the General Schedule. (Basic monthly pay does not include locality adjustments.) However, this limit does not apply to disability sustained in the performance of duty which was due to an assault which occurred during an attempted assassination of a Federal official described under 10 U.S.C. 351(a) or 1751(a).

(b) Compensation for total disability may not be less than 75 percent of the basic monthly pay of the first step of grade 2 of the General Schedule or actual pay, whichever is less. (Basic monthly pay does not include locality adjustments.)

Compensation for Death

Sec. 10.410 Who is entitled to compensation in case of death, and what are the rates of compensation payable in death cases?

(a) If there is no child entitled to compensation, the employee's surviving spouse will receive compensation equal to 50 percent of the employee's monthly pay until death or remarriage before reaching age 55. Upon remarriage, the surviving spouse will be paid a lump sum equal to 24 times the monthly compensation payment (excluding compensation payable on account of another individual) to which the surviving spouse was entitled immediately before the remarriage. If remarriage occurs at age 55 or older, the lump-sum payment will not be paid and compensation will continue until death.

(b) If there is a child entitled to compensation, the compensation for the surviving spouse will equal 45 percent of the employee's monthly pay plus 15 percent for each child, but the total percentage may not exceed 75 percent.

(c) If there is a child entitled to compensation and no surviving spouse, compensation for one child will equal 40 percent of the

employee's monthly pay. Fifteen percent will be awarded for each additional child, not to exceed 75 percent, the total amount to be shared equally among all children.

(d) If there is no child or surviving spouse entitled to compensation, the parents will receive compensation equal to 25 percent of the employee's monthly pay if one parent was wholly dependent on the employee at the time of death and the other was not dependent to any extent, or 20 percent each if both were wholly dependent on the employee, or a proportionate amount in the discretion of the Director if one or both were partially dependent on the employee. If there is a child or surviving spouse entitled to compensation, the parents will receive so much of the compensation described in the preceding sentence as, when added to the total percentages payable to the surviving spouse and children, will not exceed a total of 75 percent of the employee's monthly pay.

(e) If there is no child, surviving spouse or dependent parent entitled to compensation, the brothers, sisters, grandparents and grandchildren will receive compensation equal to 20 percent of the employee's monthly pay to such dependent if one was wholly dependent on the employee at the time of death; or 30 percent if more than one was wholly dependent, divided among such dependents equally; or 10 percent if no one was wholly dependent but one or more was partly dependent, divided among such dependents equally. If there is a child, surviving spouse or dependent parent entitled to compensation, the brothers, sisters, grandparents and grandchildren will receive so much of the compensation described in the preceding sentence as, when added to the total percentages payable to the children, surviving spouse and dependent parents, will not exceed a total of 75 percent of the employee's monthly pay.

(f) A child, brother, sister or grandchild may be entitled to receive death benefits until death, marriage, or reaching age 18. Regarding entitlement after reaching age 18, refer to Sec. 10.417 of these regulations.

Sec. 10.411 What are the maximum and minimum rates of compensation in death cases?

(a) Compensation for death may not exceed the employee's pay or 75 percent of the basic monthly pay of the highest step of grade 15 of the General Schedule, except that compensation may exceed the employee's basic monthly pay if such excess is created by authorized cost-of-living increases. (Basic monthly pay does not include locality adjustments.) However, the maximum limit does not apply when the death occurred during an assassination of a Federal official described under 18 U.S.C. 351(a) or 18 U.S.C. 1751(a).

(b) Compensation for death is computed on a minimum pay rate equal to the basic monthly pay of an employee at the first step of grade 2 of the General Schedule. (Basic monthly pay does not include locality adjustments.)

Sec. 10.412 Will OWCP pay the costs of burial and transportation of the remains?

In a case accepted for death benefits, OWCP will pay up to \$800 for funeral and burial expenses. When an employee's home is within the United States and the employee dies outside the United States, or away from home or the official duty station, an additional amount may be paid for transporting the remains to the employee's home. An additional amount of \$200 is paid to the personal representative of the decedent

for reimbursement of the costs of terminating the decedent's status as an employee of the United States.

Sec. 10.413 If a person dies while receiving a schedule award, to whom is the balance of the schedule award payable?

The circumstances under which the balance of a schedule award may be paid to an employee's survivors are described in 5 U.S.C. 8109.

Therefore, if there is no surviving spouse or child, OWCP will pay benefits as follows:

(a) To the parent, or parents, wholly dependent for support on the decedent in equal shares with any wholly dependent brother, sister, grandparent or grandchild;

(b) To the parent, or parents, partially dependent for support on the decedent in equal shares when there are no wholly dependent brothers, sisters, grandparents or grandchildren (or other wholly dependent parent); and

(c) To the parent, or parents, partially dependent upon the decedent, 25 percent of the amount payable, shared equally, and the remaining 75 percent to any wholly dependent brother, sister, grandparent or grandchild (or wholly dependent parent), shared equally.

Sec. 10.414 What reports of dependents are needed in death cases?

If a beneficiary is receiving compensation benefits on account of an employee's death, OWCP will ask him or her to complete a report once each year on Form CA-12. The report requires the beneficiary to note changes in marital status and dependents. If the beneficiary fails to submit the form (or an equivalent written statement) within 30 days of the date of request, OWCP shall suspend compensation until the requested form or equivalent written statement is received. The suspension will include compensation payable for or on behalf of another person (for example, compensation payable to a widow on behalf of a child). When the form or statement is received, compensation will be reinstated at the appropriate rate retroactive to the date of suspension, provided the beneficiary is entitled to such compensation.

Sec. 10.415 What must a beneficiary do if the number of beneficiaries decreases?

The circumstances under which compensation on account of death shall be terminated are described in 5 U.S.C. 8133(b). A beneficiary in a claim for death benefits should promptly notify OWCP of any event which would affect his or her entitlement to continued compensation. The terms ``marriage'' and ``remarriage'' include common-law marriage as recognized and defined by State law in the State where the beneficiary resides. If a beneficiary, or someone acting on his or her behalf, receives a check which includes payment of compensation for any period after the date when entitlement ended, he or she must promptly return the check to OWCP.

Sec. 10.416 How does a change in the number of beneficiaries affect the amount of compensation paid to the other beneficiaries?

If compensation to a beneficiary is terminated, the amount of compensation payable to one or more of the remaining beneficiaries may be reapportioned. Similarly, the birth of a posthumous child may result in a reapportionment of the amount of compensation payable to other beneficiaries. The parent, or someone acting on the child's behalf, shall promptly notify OWCP of the birth and submit a copy of the birth certificate.

Sec. 10.417 What reports are needed when compensation payments continue for children over age 18?

(a) Compensation payable on behalf of a child, brother, sister, or

grandchild, which would otherwise end when the person reaches 18 years of age, shall be continued if and for so long as he or she is not married and is either a student as defined in 5 U.S.C. 8101(17), or physically or mentally incapable of self-support.

(b) At least twice each year, OWCP will ask a beneficiary receiving compensation based on the student status of a dependent to provide proof of continuing entitlement to such compensation, including certification of school enrollment.

(c) Likewise, at least twice each year, OWCP will ask a beneficiary or legal guardian receiving compensation based on a dependent's physical or mental inability to support himself or herself to submit a medical report verifying that the dependent's medical condition persists and that it continues to preclude self-support.

Adjustments to Compensation

Sec. 10.420 How are cost-of-living adjustments applied?

(a) In cases of disability, a beneficiary is eligible for cost-of-living adjustments under 5 U.S.C. 8146a where injury-related disability began more than one year prior to the date the cost-of-living adjustment took effect. The employee's use of continuation of pay as provided by 5 U.S.C. 8118, or of sick or annual leave, during any part of the period of disability does not affect the computation of the one-year period.

(b) Where an injury does not result in disability but compensation is payable for permanent impairment of a covered member, organ or function of the body, a beneficiary is eligible for cost-of-living adjustments under 5 U.S.C. 8146a where the award for such impairment began more than one year prior to the date the cost-of-living adjustment took effect.

(c) In cases of recurrence of disability, where the pay rate for compensation purposes is the pay rate at the time disability recurs, a beneficiary is eligible for cost-of-living adjustments under 5 U.S.C. 8146a where the effective date of that pay rate began more than one year prior to the date the cost-of living adjustment took effect.

(d) In cases of death, entitlement to cost-of-living adjustments under 5 U.S.C. 8146a begins with the first such adjustment occurring more than one year after the date of death. However, if the death was preceded by a period of injury-related disability, compensation payable to the survivors will be increased by the same percentages as the cost-of-living adjustments paid or payable to the deceased employee for the period of disability, as well as by subsequent cost-of-living adjustments to which the survivors would otherwise be entitled.

Sec. 10.421 May a beneficiary receive other kinds of payments from the Federal Government concurrently with compensation?

(a) 5 U.S.C. 8116(a) provides that a beneficiary may not receive wage-loss compensation concurrently with a Federal retirement or survivor annuity. The beneficiary must elect the benefit that he or she wishes to receive, and the election, once made, is revocable.

(b) An employee may receive compensation concurrently with military retired pay, retirement pay, retainer pay or equivalent pay for service in the Armed Forces or other uniformed services, subject to the reduction of such pay in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 5532(b).

(c) An employee may not receive compensation for total disability concurrently with severance pay or separation pay. However, an employee may concurrently receive compensation for partial disability or

permanent impairment to a schedule member, organ or function with severance pay or separation pay.

(d) Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8116(d), a beneficiary may receive compensation under the FECA for either the death or disability of an employee concurrently with benefits under title II of the Social Security Act on account of the age or death of such employee. However, this provision of the FECA also requires OWCP to reduce the amount of any such compensation by the amount of any Social Security Act benefits that are attributable to the Federal service of the employee.

(e) To determine the employee's entitlement to compensation, OWCP may require an employee to submit an affidavit or statement as to the receipt of any Federally funded or Federally assisted benefits. If an employee fails to submit such affidavit or statement within 30 days of the date of the request, his or her right to compensation shall be suspended until such time as the requested affidavit or statement is received. At that time compensation will be reinstated retroactive to the date of suspension provided the employee is entitled to such compensation.

Sec. 10.422 May compensation payments be issued in a lump sum?

(a) In exercise of the discretion afforded under 5 U.S.C. 8135(a), OWCP has determined that lump-sum payments will not be made to persons entitled to wage-loss benefits (that is, those payable under 5 U.S.C. 8105 and 8106). Therefore, when OWCP receives requests for lump-sum payments for wage-loss benefits, OWCP will not exercise further discretion in the matter. This determination is based on several factors, including:

- (1) The purpose of the FECA, which is to replace lost wages;
- (2) The prudence of providing wage-loss benefits on a regular, recurring basis; and
- (3) The high cost of the long-term borrowing that is needed to pay out large lump sums.

(b) However, a lump-sum payment may be made to an employee entitled to a schedule award under 5 U.S.C. 8107 where OWCP determines that such a payment is in the employee's best interest. Lump-sum payments of schedule awards generally will be considered in the employee's best interest only where the employee does not rely upon compensation payments as a substitute for lost wages (that is, the employee is working or is receiving annuity payments). An employee possesses no absolute right to a lump-sum payment of benefits payable under 5 U.S.C. 8107.

(c) Lump-sum payments to surviving spouses are addressed in 5 U.S.C. 8135(b).

Sec. 10.423 May compensation payments be assigned to, or attached by, creditors?

(a) As a general rule, compensation and claims for compensation are exempt from the claims of private creditors. This rule does not apply to claims submitted by Federal agencies. Further, any attempt by a FECA beneficiary to assign his or her claim is null and void. However, pursuant to provisions of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 659, and regulations issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) at 5 CFR part 581, FECA benefits, including survivor's benefits, may be garnished to collect overdue alimony and child support payments.

(b) Garnishment for child support and alimony may be requested by providing a copy of the State agency or court order to the district

office handling the FECA claim.

Sec. 10.424 May someone other than the beneficiary be designated to receive compensation payments?

A beneficiary may be incapable of managing or directing the management of his or her benefits because of a mental or physical disability, or because of legal incompetence, or because he or she is under 18 years of age. In this situation, absent the appointment of a guardian or other party to manage the financial affairs of the claimant by a court or administrative body authorized to do so, OWCP in its sole discretion may approve a person to serve as the representative payee for funds due the beneficiary.

Sec. 10.425 May compensation be claimed for periods of restorable leave?

The employee may claim compensation for periods of annual and sick leave which are restorable in accordance with the rules of the employing agency. Forms CA-7a and CA-7b are used for this purpose.

Overpayments

Sec. 10.430 How does OWCP notify an individual of a payment made?

(a) In addition to providing narrative descriptions to recipients of benefits paid or payable, OWCP includes on each periodic check a clear indication of the period for which payment is being made. A form is sent to the recipient with each supplemental check which states the date and amount of the payment and the period for which payment is being made. For payments sent by electronic funds transfer (EFT), a notification of the date and amount of payment appears on the statement from the recipient's financial institution.

(b) By these means, OWCP puts the recipient on notice that a payment was made and the amount of the payment. If the amount received differs from the amount indicated on the written notice or bank statement, the recipient is responsible for notifying OWCP of the difference. Absent affirmative evidence to the contrary, the beneficiary will be presumed to have received the notice of payment, whether mailed or transmitted electronically.

Sec. 10.431 What does OWCP do when an overpayment is identified?

Before seeking to recover an overpayment or adjust benefits, OWCP will advise the beneficiary in writing that:

- (a) The overpayment exists, and the amount of overpayment;
- (b) A preliminary finding shows either that the individual was or was not at fault in the creation of the overpayment;
- (c) He or she has the right to inspect and copy Government records relating to the overpayment; and
- (d) He or she has the right to present evidence which challenges the fact or amount of the overpayment, and/or challenges the preliminary finding that he or she was at fault in the creation of the overpayment. He or she may also request that recovery of the overpayment be waived.

Sec. 10.432 How can an individual present evidence to OWCP in response to a preliminary notice of an overpayment?

The individual may present this evidence to OWCP in writing or at a pre-recoupment hearing. The evidence must be presented at the hearing

requested within 30 days of the date of the written notice of overpayment. Failure to request the hearing within this 30-day time period shall constitute a waiver of that right.

Sec. 10.433 Under what circumstances can OWCP waive recovery of an overpayment?

(a) OWCP may consider waiving an overpayment only if the individual to whom it was made was not at fault in accepting or creating the overpayment. Each recipient of compensation benefits is responsible for taking all reasonable measures to ensure that payments he or she receives from OWCP are proper. The recipient must show good faith and exercise a high degree of care in reporting events which may affect entitlement to or the amount of benefits. A recipient who has done any of the following will be found to be at fault with respect to creating an overpayment:

(1) Made an incorrect statement as to a material fact which he or she knew or should have known to be incorrect; or

(2) Failed to provide information which he or she knew or should have known to be material; or

(3) Accepted a payment which he or she knew or should have known to be incorrect. (This provision applies only to the overpaid individual.)

(b) Whether or not OWCP determines that an individual was at fault with respect to the creation of an overpayment depends on the circumstances surrounding the overpayment. The degree of care expected may vary with the complexity of those circumstances and the individual's capacity to realize that he or she is being overpaid.

Sec. 10.434 If OWCP finds that the recipient of an overpayment was not at fault, what criteria are used to decide whether to waive recovery of it?

If OWCP finds that the recipient of an overpayment was not at fault, repayment will still be required unless:

(a) Adjustment or recovery of the overpayment would defeat the purpose of the FECA (see Sec. 10.436), or

(b) Adjustment or recovery of the overpayment would be against equity and good conscience (see Sec. 10.437).

Sec. 10.435 Is an individual responsible for an overpayment that resulted from an error made by OWCP or another Government agency?

(a) The fact that OWCP may have erred in making the overpayment, or that the overpayment may have resulted from an error by another Government agency, does not by itself relieve the individual who received the overpayment from liability for repayment if the individual also was at fault in accepting the overpayment.

(b) However, OWCP may find that the individual was not at fault if failure to report an event affecting compensation benefits, or acceptance of an incorrect payment, occurred because:

(1) The individual relied on misinformation given in writing by OWCP (or by another Government agency which he or she had reason to believe was connected with the administration of benefits) as to the interpretation of a pertinent provision of the FECA or its regulations; or

(2) OWCP erred in calculating cost-of-living increases, schedule award length and/or percentage of impairment, or loss of wage-earning

capacity.

Sec. 10.436 Under what circumstances would recovery of an overpayment defeat the purpose of the FECA?

Recovery of an overpayment will defeat the purpose of the FECA if such recovery would cause hardship to a currently or formerly entitled beneficiary because:

(a) The beneficiary from whom OWCP seeks recovery needs substantially all of his or her current income (including compensation benefits) to meet current ordinary and necessary living expenses; and

(b) The beneficiary's assets do not exceed a specified amount as determined by OWCP from data furnished by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. A higher amount is specified for a beneficiary with one or more dependents.

Sec. 10.437 Under what circumstances would recovery of an overpayment be against equity and good conscience?

(a) Recovery of an overpayment is considered to be against equity and good conscience when any individual who received an overpayment would experience severe financial hardship in attempting to repay the debt.

(b) Recovery of an overpayment is also considered to be against equity and good conscience when any individual, in reliance on such payments or on notice that such payments would be made, gives up a valuable right or changes his or her position for the worse. In making such a decision, OWCP does not consider the individual's current ability to repay the overpayment.

(1) To establish that a valuable right has been relinquished, it must be shown that the right was in fact valuable, that it cannot be regained, and that the action was based chiefly or solely in reliance on the payments or on the notice of payment. Donations to charitable causes or gratuitous transfers of funds to other individuals are not considered relinquishments of valuable rights.

(2) To establish that an individual's position has changed for the worse, it must be shown that the decision made would not otherwise have been made but for the receipt of benefits, and that this decision resulted in a loss.

Sec. 10.438 Can OWCP require the individual who received the overpayment to submit additional financial information?

(a) The individual who received the overpayment is responsible for providing information about income, expenses and assets as specified by OWCP. This information is needed to determine whether or not recovery of an overpayment would defeat the purpose of the FECA, or be against equity and good conscience. This information will also be used to determine the repayment schedule, if necessary.

(b) Failure to submit the requested information within 30 days of the request shall result in denial of waiver, and no further request for waiver shall be considered until the requested information is furnished.

Sec. 10.439 What is addressed at a pre-recoupment hearing?

At a pre-recoupment hearing, the OWCP representative will consider all issues in the claim on which a formal decision has been issued. Such a hearing will thus fulfill OWCP's obligation to provide pre-recoupment

rights and a hearing under 5 U.S.C. 8124(b). Pre-recoupment hearings shall be conducted in exactly the same manner as provided in Sec. 10.615 through Sec. 10.622.

Sec. 10.440 How does OWCP communicate its final decision concerning recovery of an overpayment, and what appeal right accompanies it?

(a) OWCP will send a copy of the final decision to the individual from whom recovery is sought; his or her representative, if any; and the employing agency.

(b) The only review of a final decision concerning an overpayment is to the Employees' Compensation Appeals Board. The provisions of 5 U.S.C. 8124(b) (concerning hearings) and 5 U.S.C. 8128(a) (concerning reconsiderations) do not apply to such a decision.

Sec. 10.441 How are overpayments collected?

(a) When an overpayment has been made to an individual who is entitled to further payments, the individual shall refund to OWCP the amount of the overpayment as soon as the error is discovered or his or her attention is called to same. If no refund is made, OWCP shall decrease later payments of compensation, taking into account the probable extent of future payments, the rate of compensation, the financial circumstances of the individual, and any other relevant factors, so as to minimize any hardship. Should the individual die before collection has been completed, collection shall be made by decreasing later payments, if any, payable under the FECA with respect to the individual's death.

(b) When an overpayment has been made to an individual who is not entitled to further payments, the individual shall refund to OWCP the amount of the overpayment as soon as the error is discovered or his or her attention is called to same. The overpayment is subject to the provisions of the Federal Claims Collection Act of 1966 (as amended) and may be reported to the Internal Revenue Service as income. If the individual fails to make such refund, OWCP may recover the same through any available means, including offset of salary, annuity benefits, or other Federal payments, including tax refunds as authorized by the Tax Refund Offset Program, or referral of the debt to a collection agency or to the Department of Justice.

Subpart F--Continuing Benefits

Rules and Evidence

Sec. 10.500 What are the basic rules governing continuing receipt of compensation benefits and return to work?

(a) Benefits are available only while the effects of a work-related condition continue. Compensation for wage loss due to disability is available only for any periods during which an employee's work-related medical condition prevents him or her from earning the wages earned before the work-related injury. Payment of medical benefits is available for all treatment necessary due to a work-related medical condition.

(b) Each disabled employee is obligated to perform such work as he or she can, and OWCP's goal is to return each disabled employee to suitable work as soon as he or she is medically able. In determining what constitutes ``suitable work'' for a particular disabled employee, OWCP considers the

employee's current physical limitations, whether the work is available within the employee's demonstrated commuting area, the employee's qualifications to perform such work, and other relevant factors. (See Sec. 10.508 with respect to the payment of relocation expenses.)

Sec. 10.501 What medical evidence is necessary to support continuing receipt of compensation benefits?

(a) The employee is responsible for providing sufficient medical evidence to justify payment of any compensation sought.

(1) To support payment of continuing compensation, narrative medical evidence must be submitted whenever OWCP requests it but ordinarily not less than once a year. It must contain a physician's rationalized opinion as to whether the specific period of alleged disability is causally related to the employee's accepted injury or illness.

(2) The physician's opinion must be based on the facts of the case and the complete medical background of the employee, must be one of reasonable medical certainty and must include objective findings in support of its conclusions. Subjective complaints of pain are not sufficient, in and of themselves, to support payment of continuing compensation. Likewise, medical limitations based solely on the fear of a possible future injury are also not sufficient to support payment of continuing compensation. See Sec. 10.330 for a fuller discussion of medical evidence.

(b) OWCP may require any kind of non-invasive testing to determine the employee's functional capacity. Failure to undergo such testing will result in a suspension of benefits. In addition, OWCP may direct the employee to undergo a second opinion or referee examination in any case it deems appropriate (see Secs. 10.320 and 10.321).

Sec. 10.502 How does OWCP evaluate evidence in support of continuing receipt of compensation benefits?

In considering the medical and factual evidence, OWCP will weigh the probative value of the attending physician's report, any second opinion physician's report, any other medical reports, or any other evidence in the file. If OWCP determines that the medical evidence supporting one conclusion is more consistent, logical, and well-reasoned than evidence supporting a contrary conclusion, OWCP will use the conclusion that is supported by the weight of the medical evidence as the basis for awarding or denying further benefits. If medical reports that are equally well-reasoned support inconsistent determinations of an issue under consideration, OWCP will direct the employee to undergo a referee examination to resolve the issue. The results of the referee examination will be given special weight in determining the issue.

Sec. 10.503 Under what circumstances may OWCP reduce or terminate compensation benefits?

Once OWCP has advised the employee that it has accepted a claim and has either approved continuation of pay or paid medical benefits or compensation, benefits will not be terminated or reduced unless the weight of the evidence establishes that:

- (a) The disability for which compensation was paid has ceased;
- (b) The disabling condition is no longer causally related to the employment;
- (c) The employee is only partially disabled;
- (d) The employee has returned to work;

(e) The beneficiary was convicted of fraud in connection with a claim under the FECA, or the beneficiary was incarcerated based on any felony conviction; or

(f) OWCP's initial decision was in error.

Return to Work--Employer's Responsibilities

Sec. 10.505 What actions must the employer take?

Upon authorizing medical care, the employer should advise the employee in writing as soon as possible of his or her obligation to return to work under Sec. 10.210 and as defined in this subpart. The term ``return to work'' as used in this subpart is not limited to returning to work at the employee's normal worksite or usual position, but may include returning to work at other locations and in other positions. In general, the employer should make all reasonable efforts to place the employee in his or her former or an equivalent position, in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 8151(b)(2), if the employee has fully recovered after one year. The Office of Personnel Management (not OWCP) administers this provision.

(a) Where the employer has specific alternative positions available for partially disabled employees, the employer should advise the employee in writing of the specific duties and physical requirements of those positions.

(b) Where the employer has no specific alternative positions available for an employee who can perform restricted or limited duties, the employer should advise the employee of any accommodations the agency can make to accommodate the employee's limitations due to the injury.

Sec. 10.506 May the employer monitor the employee's medical care?

The employer may monitor the employee's medical progress and duty status by obtaining periodic medical reports. Form CA-17 is usually adequate for this purpose. To aid in returning an injured employee to suitable employment, the employer may also contact the employee's physician in writing concerning the work limitations imposed by the effects of the injury and possible job assignments. (However, the employer shall not contact the physician by telephone or through personal visit.) When such contact is made, the employer shall send a copy of any such correspondence to OWCP and the employee, as well as a copy of the physician's response when received. The employer may also contact the employee at reasonable intervals to request periodic medical reports addressing his or her ability to return to work.

Sec. 10.507 How should the employer make an offer of suitable work?

Where the attending physician or OWCP notifies the employer in writing that the employee is partially disabled (that is, the employee can perform some work but not return to the position held at date of injury), the employer should act as follows:

(a) If the employee can perform in a specific alternative position available in the agency, and the employer has advised the employee in writing of the specific duties and physical requirements, the employer shall notify the employee in writing immediately of the date of availability.

(b) If the employee can perform restricted or limited duties, the employer should determine whether such duties are available or whether an existing job can be modified. If so, the employer shall advise the

employee in writing of the duties, their physical requirements and availability.

(c) The employer must make any job offer in writing. However, the employer may make a job offer verbally as long as it provides the job offer to the employee in writing within two business days of the verbal job offer.

(d) The offer must include a description of the duties of the position, the physical requirements of those duties, and the date by which the employee is either to return to work or notify the employer of his or her decision to accept or refuse the job offer. The employer must send a complete copy of any job offer to OWCP when it is sent to the employee.

Sec. 10.508 May relocation expenses be paid for an employee who would need to move to accept an offer of reemployment?

If possible, the employer should offer suitable reemployment in the location where the employee currently resides. If this is not practical, the employer may offer suitable reemployment at the employee's former duty station or other location. Where the distance between the location of the offered job and the location where the employee currently resides is at least 50 miles, OWCP may pay such relocation expenses as are considered reasonable and necessary if the employee has been terminated from the agency's employment rolls and would incur relocation expenses by accepting the offered reemployment. OWCP may also pay such relocation expenses when the new employer is other than a Federal employer. OWCP will notify the employee that relocation expenses are payable if it makes a finding that the job is suitable. To determine whether a relocation expense is reasonable and necessary, OWCP shall use as a guide the Federal travel regulations for permanent changes of duty station.

Sec. 10.509 If an employee's light-duty job is eliminated due to downsizing, what is the effect on compensation?

(a) In general, an employee will not be considered to have experienced a compensable recurrence of disability as defined in Sec. 10.5(x) merely because his or her employer has eliminated the employee's light-duty position in a reduction-in-force or some other form of downsizing. When this occurs, OWCP will determine the employee's wage-earning capacity based on his or her actual earnings in such light-duty position if this determination is appropriate on the basis that such earnings fairly and reasonably represent the employee's wage-earning capacity and such a determination has not already been made.

(b) For the purposes of this section only, a light-duty position means a classified position to which the injured employee has been formally reassigned that conforms to the established physical limitations of the injured employee and for which the employer has already prepared a written position description such that the position constitutes ``regular'' Federal employment. In the absence of a ``light-duty position'' as described in this paragraph, OWCP will assume that the employee was instead engaged in non-competitive employment which does not represent the employee's wage-earning capacity, i.e., work of the type provided to injured employees who cannot otherwise be employed by the Federal Government or in any well-known branch of the general labor market.

Return to Work--Employee's Responsibilities

Sec. 10.515 What actions must the employee take with respect to returning to work?

(a) If an employee can resume regular Federal employment, he or she must do so. No further compensation for wage loss is payable once the employee has recovered from the work-related injury to the extent that he or she can perform the duties of the position held at the time of injury, or earn equivalent wages.

(b) If an employee cannot return to the job held at the time of injury due to partial disability from the effects of the work-related injury, but has recovered enough to perform some type of work, he or she must seek work. In the alternative, the employee must accept suitable work offered to him or her. (See Sec. 10.500 for a definition of ``suitable work''.) This work may be with the original employer or through job placement efforts made by or on behalf of OWCP.

(c) If the employer has advised an employee in writing that specific alternative positions exist within the agency, the employee shall provide the description and physical requirements of such alternate positions to the attending physician and ask whether and when he or she will be able to perform such duties.

(d) If the employer has advised an employee that it is willing to accommodate his or her work limitations, the employee shall so advise the attending physician and ask him or her to specify the limitations imposed by the injury. The employee is responsible for advising the employer immediately of these limitations.

(e) From time to time, OWCP may require the employee to report his or her efforts to obtain suitable employment, whether with the Federal Government, State and local Governments, or in the private sector.

Sec. 10.516 How will an employee know if OWCP considers a job to be suitable?

OWCP shall advise the employee that it has found the offered work to be suitable and afford the employee 30 days to accept the job or present any reasons to counter OWCP's finding of suitability. If the employee presents such reasons, and OWCP determines that the reasons are unacceptable, it will notify the employee of that determination and that he or she has 15 days in which to accept the offered work without penalty. At that point in time, OWCP's notification need not state the reasons for finding that the employee's reasons are not acceptable.

Sec. 10.517 What are the penalties for refusing to accept a suitable job offer?

(a) 5 U.S.C. 8106(c) provides that a partially disabled employee who refuses to seek suitable work, or refuses to or neglects to work after suitable work is offered to or arranged for him or her, is not entitled to compensation. An employee who refuses or neglects to work after suitable work has been offered or secured for him or her has the burden to show that this refusal or failure to work was reasonable or justified.

(b) After providing the two notices described in Sec. 10.516, OWCP will terminate the employee's entitlement to further compensation under 5 U.S.C. 8105, 8106, and 8107, as provided by 5 U.S.C. 8106(c)(2). However, the employee remains entitled to medical benefits as provided by 5 U.S.C. 8103.

Sec. 10.518 Does OWCP provide services to help employees return to

work?

(a) OWCP may, in its discretion, provide vocational rehabilitation services as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 8104. These services include assistance from registered nurses working under the direction of OWCP. Among other things, these nurses visit the worksite, ensure that the duties of the position do not exceed the medical limitations as represented by the weight of medical evidence established by OWCP, and address any problems the employee may have in adjusting to the work setting. The nurses do not evaluate medical evidence; OWCP claims staff perform this function.

(b) Vocational rehabilitation services may also include vocational evaluation, testing, training, and placement services with either the original employer or a new employer, when the injured employee cannot return to the job held at the time of injury. These services also include functional capacity evaluations, which help to tailor individual rehabilitation programs to employees' physical reconditioning and behavioral modification needs, and help employees to meet the demands of current or potential jobs.

Sec. 10.519 What action will OWCP take if an employee refuses to undergo vocational rehabilitation?

Under 5 U.S.C. 8104(a), OWCP may direct a permanently disabled employee to undergo vocational rehabilitation. To ensure that vocational rehabilitation services are available to all who might be entitled to benefit from them, an injured employee who has a loss of wage-earning capacity shall be presumed to be ``permanently disabled,'' for purposes of this section only, unless and until the employee proves that the disability is not permanent. If an employee without good cause fails or refuses to apply for, undergo, participate in, or continue to participate in a vocational rehabilitation effort when so directed, OWCP will act as follows:

(a) Where a suitable job has been identified, OWCP will reduce the employee's future monetary compensation based on the amount which would likely have been his or her wage-earning capacity had he or she undergone vocational rehabilitation. OWCP will determine this amount in accordance with the job identified through the vocational rehabilitation planning process, which includes meetings with the OWCP nurse and the employer. The reduction will remain in effect until such time as the employee acts in good faith to comply with the direction of OWCP.

(b) Where a suitable job has not been identified, because the failure or refusal occurred in the early but necessary stages of a vocational rehabilitation effort (that is, meetings with the OWCP nurse, interviews, testing, counseling, functional capacity evaluations, and work evaluations), OWCP cannot determine what would have been the employee's wage-earning capacity.

(c) Under the circumstances identified in paragraph (b) of this section, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, OWCP will assume that the vocational rehabilitation effort would have resulted in a return to work with no loss of wage-earning capacity, and OWCP will reduce the employee's monetary compensation accordingly (that is, to zero). This reduction will remain in effect until such time as the employee acts in good faith to comply with the direction of OWCP.

Sec. 10.520 How does OWCP determine compensation after an employee completes a vocational rehabilitation program?

After completion of a vocational rehabilitation program, OWCP may adjust compensation to reflect the injured worker's wage-earning capacity. Actual earnings will be used if they fairly and reasonably reflect the earning capacity. The position determined to be the goal of a training plan is assumed to represent the employee's earning capacity if it is suitable and performed in sufficient numbers so as to be reasonably available, whether or not the employee is placed in such a position.

Reports of Earnings From Employment and Self-Employment

Sec. 10.525 What information must the employee report?

(a) An employee who is receiving compensation for partial or total disability must advise OWCP immediately of any return to work, either part-time or full-time. In addition, an employee who is receiving compensation for partial or total disability will periodically be required to submit a report of earnings from employment or self-employment, either part-time or full-time. (See Sec. 10.5(g) for a definition of ``earnings''.)

(b) The employee must report even those earnings which do not seem likely to affect his or her level of benefits. Many kinds of income, though not all, will result in reduction of compensation benefits. While earning income will not necessarily result in a reduction of compensation, failure to report income may result in forfeiture of all benefits paid during the reporting period.

Sec. 10.526 Must the employee report volunteer activities?

An employee who is receiving compensation for partial or total disability is periodically required to report volunteer activity or any other kind of activity which shows that the employee is no longer totally disabled for work.

Sec. 10.527 Does OWCP verify reports of earnings?

To make proper determinations of an employee's entitlement to benefits, OWCP may verify the earnings reported by the employee through a variety of means, including but not limited to computer matches with the Office of Personnel Management and inquiries to the Social Security Administration. Also, OWCP may perform computer matches with records of State agencies, including but not limited to workers' compensation administrations, to determine whether private employers are paying workers' compensation insurance premiums for recipients of benefits under the FECA.

Sec. 10.528 What action will OWCP take if the employee fails to file a report of activity indicating an ability to work?

OWCP periodically requires each employee who is receiving compensation benefits to complete an affidavit as to any work, or activity indicating an ability to work, which the employee has performed for the prior 15 months. If an employee who is required to file such a report fails to do so within 30 days of the date of the request, his or her right to compensation for wage loss under 5 U.S.C. 8105 or 8106 is suspended until OWCP receives the requested report. At that time, OWCP will reinstate compensation retroactive to the date of suspension if the employee remains entitled to compensation.

Sec. 10.529 What action will OWCP take if the employee files an incomplete report?

(a) If an employee knowingly omits or understates any earnings or work activity in making a report, he or she shall forfeit the right to compensation with respect to any period for which the report was required. A false or evasive statement, omission, concealment, or misrepresentation with respect to employment activity or earnings in a report may also subject an employee to criminal prosecution.

(b) Where the right to compensation is forfeited, OWCP shall recover any compensation already paid for the period of forfeiture pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8129 and other relevant statutes.

Reports of Dependents

Sec. 10.535 How are dependents defined, and what information must the employee report?

(a) Dependents in disability cases are defined in Sec. 10.405. While the employee has one or more dependents, the employee's basic compensation for wage loss or for permanent impairment shall be augmented as provided in 5 U.S.C. 8110. (The rules for death claims are found in Sec. 10.414.)

(b) An employee who is receiving augmented compensation on account of dependents must advise OWCP immediately of any change in the number or status of dependents. The employee should also promptly refund to OWCP any amounts received on account of augmented compensation after the right to receive augmented compensation has ceased. Any difference between actual entitlement and the amount already paid beyond the date entitlement ended is an overpayment of compensation and may be recovered pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8129 and other relevant statutes.

(c) An employee who is receiving augmented compensation shall be periodically required to submit a statement as to any dependents, or to submit supporting documents such as birth or marriage certificates or court orders, to determine if he or she is still entitled to augmented compensation.

Sec. 10.536 What is the penalty for failing to submit a report of dependents?

If an employee fails to submit a requested statement or supporting document within 30 days of the date of the request, OWCP will suspend his or her right to augmented compensation until OWCP receives the requested statement or supporting document. At that time, OWCP will reinstate augmented compensation retroactive to the date of suspension, provided that the employee is entitled to receive augmented compensation.

Sec. 10.537 What reports are needed when compensation payments continue for children over age 18?

(a) Compensation payable on behalf of a child that would otherwise end when the child reaches 18 years of age will continue if and for so long as he or she is not married and is either a student as defined in 5 U.S.C. 8101(17), or physically or mentally incapable of self-support.

(b) At least twice each year, OWCP will ask an employee who receives compensation based on the student status of a child to provide proof of continuing entitlement to such compensation, including certification of

school enrollment.

(c) Likewise, at least twice each year, OWCP will ask an employee who receives compensation based on a child's physical or mental inability to support himself or herself to submit a medical report verifying that the child's medical condition persists and that it continues to preclude self-support.

(d) If an employee fails to submit proof within 30 days of the date of the request, OWCP will suspend the employee's right to compensation until the requested information is received. At that time OWCP will reinstate compensation retroactive to the date of suspension, provided the employee is entitled to such compensation.

Reduction and Termination of Compensation

Sec. 10.540 When and how is compensation reduced or terminated?

(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section, where the evidence establishes that compensation should be either reduced or terminated, OWCP will provide the beneficiary with written notice of the proposed action and give him or her 30 days to submit relevant evidence or argument to support entitlement to continued payment of compensation. This notice will include a description of the reasons for the proposed action and a copy of the specific evidence upon which OWCP is basing its determination. Payment of compensation will continue until any evidence or argument submitted has been reviewed and an appropriate decision has been issued, or until 30 days have elapsed if no additional evidence or argument is submitted.

(b) OWCP will not provide such written notice when the beneficiary has no reasonable basis to expect that payment of compensation will continue. For example, when a claim has been made for a specific period of time and that specific period expires, no written notice will be given. Written notice will also not be given when a beneficiary dies, when OWCP either reduces or terminates compensation upon an employee's return to work, when OWCP terminates only medical benefits after a physician indicates that further medical treatment is not necessary or has ended, or when OWCP denies payment for a particular medical expense.

(c) OWCP will also not provide such written notice when compensation is terminated, suspended or forfeited due to one of the following: A beneficiary's conviction for fraud in connection with a claim under the FECA; a beneficiary's incarceration based on any felony conviction; an employee's failure to report earnings from employment or self-employment; an employee's failure or refusal to either continue performing suitable work or to accept an offer of suitable work; or an employee's refusal to undergo or obstruction of a directed medical examination or treatment for substance abuse.

Sec. 10.541 What action will OWCP take after issuing written notice of its intention to reduce or terminate compensation?

(a) If the beneficiary submits evidence or argument prior to the issuance of the decision, OWCP will evaluate it in light of the proposed action and undertake such further development as it may deem appropriate, if any. Evidence or argument which is repetitious, cumulative, or irrelevant will not require any further development. If the beneficiary does not respond within 30 days of the written notice, OWCP will issue a decision consistent with its prior notice. OWCP will not grant any request for an extension of this 30-day period.

(b) Evidence or argument which refutes the evidence upon which the

proposed action was based will result in the continued payment of compensation. If the beneficiary submits evidence or argument which fails to refute the evidence upon which the proposed action was based but which requires further development, OWCP will not provide the beneficiary with another notice of its proposed action upon completion of such development. Once any further development of the evidence is completed, OWCP will either continue payment or issue a decision consistent with its prior notice.